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Make Your Own CDs: A CD-RW Roundup



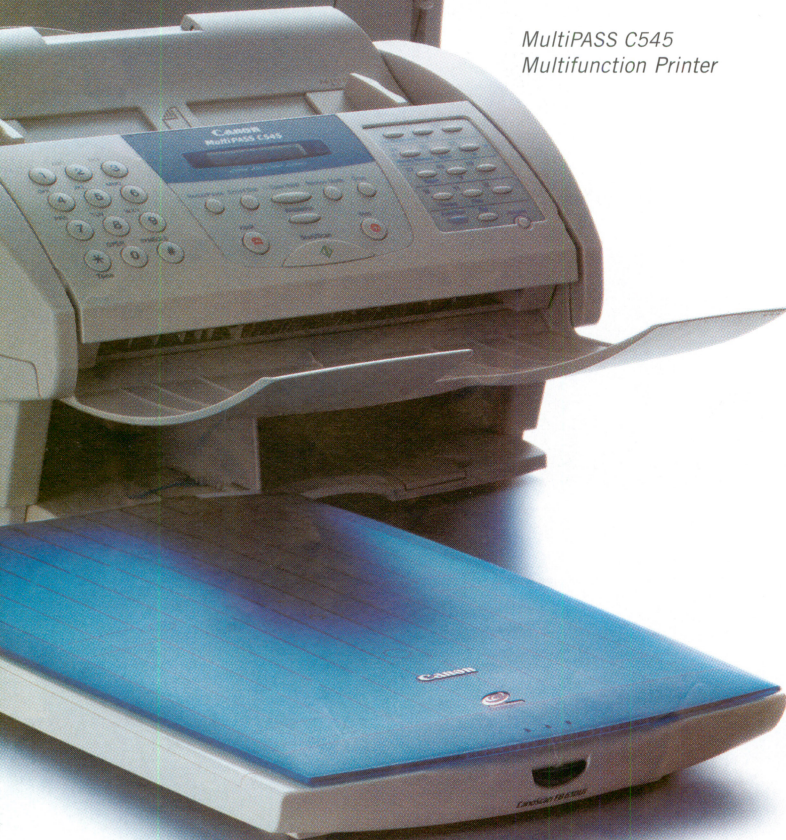
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name: "Jill"

age: 32

hobbies: Indie bands
Organic gardening
Kick boxing

Microsoft
Excel
Macintosh Edition

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Microsoft

The Home Choice Issue

Burn Baby Burn _____ 16

By Ross Tibbits

Have you "burned" (recorded) your first CD-ROM yet? No? Well it's high time you get started. *MacHome* takes five CD-RW drives for a spin, and tells you which ones come out on top.

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So many products, so little time. How's a Mac-lover to sort through all the hardware and software at large in the world? With a little help from the editors of *MacHome*! Here's our annual rundown of the best of the best.

Decisions, Decisions _____ 28

By Becky Waring

So, you're ready to buy a Mac. Good move. But which one will you choose? A portable, or a desktop model? A G4, or a G3? It all depends on your needs. We'll help you sort through which Mac is best for you.

OS X Preview _____ 32

By David Weiss

Here, we'll provide answers to basic questions about Apple's revolutionary new operating system.



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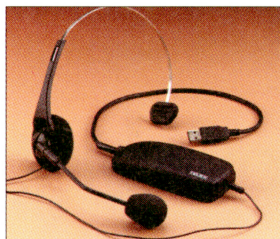
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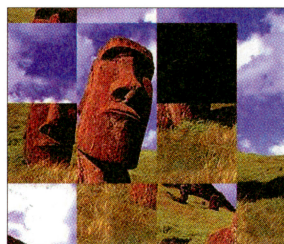
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- ★★★★★ Virex 6.0
- ★★★★★ ArtMatic
- ★★★★★ Fireworks 3
- ★★★★★ YankPro 3.1
- ★★★★★ CD-ROM Toolkit
- ★★★★★ Canvas 7 SE
- ★★★★★ Now Up-to-Date & Contact

Your Office: Hardware

- ★★★★★ Diamond Plus 91 Monitor
- ★★★★★ Telex USB Digital Microphones
- ★★★★★ RF-25 Wireless SurfBoard
- ★★★★★ AirEZY Wireless Ethernet Adapter
- ★★★★★ Z52 Printer

Entertainment

- ★★★★★ Railroad Tycoon II:
- ★★★★★ The Second Century
- ★★★★★ Sid Meier's Alien Crossfire
- ★★★★★ The Stone
- ★★★★★ Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, 2nd Edition

Your Family

- ★★★★★ Flash Action Go Fish
- ★★★★★ Flash Action Old Maid
- ★★★★★ MP Express

Our Rating System

- ★★★★★ **Mac-nificent.** You gotta get it. No flaws.
- ★★★★ **Excellent.** Recommended even if it has a minor flaw or two.
- ★★★ **Average.** Despite problems, still a worthwhile product.
- ★★ **Below Average.** Has serious flaws that limit its usefulness or fun.
- ★ **Poor.** Avoid this product at all costs.



Indicates iMac/G3 compatibility

Hang On to Your Hats!

We Mac users are like the proverbial kids in a candy store, but what a voluminous, well-appointed candy store it is.

In short, these are the days of abundance, of mad hilarity. This month, we're proud to present our annual Home Choice awards, in which we pick the best of the best across all product categories. And the choices are bewildering, compared to last year. Last year there was the original Bondi Blue iMac, and now there are three. Last year, we had

one portable Mac — the venerable PowerBook — and now we've got an iBook, too.

But it's not just Apple that's giving us more to choose from. Last year there were two manufacturers of consumer-friendly inkjet printers, and now there

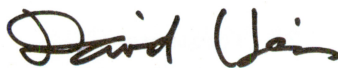
are four. Last year there were two or three manufacturers of Mac-compatible CD-RWs, and now there are about seven and counting.

Now if this proliferation of hardware quickens your pulse, just wait for what's sure to happen with software. At Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC) this past May, attendance was up 40% over last year. Yes, it's true — a veritable army of roughly 4,000 developers turned out for this event, and remember, these are *Mac* developers. They stay up late at night dreaming up cool new software for *you*, and they gathered at the

San Jose Convention Center to make those dreams real. That's a lot of developers, a lot of dreams, and soon, hopefully, it will mean a lot of software.

Why such enthusiasm on the part of developers? Mostly, it's because the Mac is a clear, unmistakable, and growing presence in the home computer market. The numbers are pretty impressive, just taking into account the iMac alone. At the WWDC keynote, iCEO Steve Jobs told us that there are now more than 3.4 million iMacs in the world. Considering this charismatic li'l Mac was introduced just two years ago, that's a lot of iMacs in a short time. But most importantly, he told us that 28% were for people who never before owned a computer, and that 17% had switched over from using a Wintel box. That means that 45% of all those iMacs went to folks who are new to the Mac, and that makes developers want to get up and run down to conferences like the WWDC to find out all about making software for the Mac.

So hang onto your hats — your sunhats, that is — today we've got some incredible weather, and the outlook for tomorrow looks even better.



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Word to the Wise

Recently I purchased a ViewSonic LCD monitor from MacWarehouse. The monitor arrived with a defective pixel. (The pixel is stuck on bright red.) Since I am using the monitor for graphics applications, I must say that it is quite annoying to have a red pixel appear in every image on the screen. I contacted MacWarehouse about returning the product and they stated that they would not allow me to return it. They said that one defective pixel is not grounds for returning the product. Nowhere in the catalog is there any warning about this. I would strongly encourage your magazine to alert your readers that they are taking a chance by buying a monitor from MacWarehouse.

— Robert Gerry

Uch. This, unfortunately, is probably not MacWarehouse's fault, although, as you say, they could have provided you with some sort of warning. Each manufacturer of flat panels has its own criteria for return — number of "stuck" pixels, whether they are touching, etc. So it's a good idea, when you're purchasing a flat panel, to know the policy of the store you are buying it from. Also, you might want to buy a flat panel from an actual store, so you can take a look at it before you buy it.

Chaos Theory

Unbeknownst to the general public, Apple Computer has created a monster — into the already overstuffed dictionary of computing acronyms Apple has introduced a frightening new entry: AICC (Apple-Induced Color Chaos). AICC is pronounced exactly like the word "ache," a word with which it shares some physical correspondences — especially when you consider what AICC does to your head.

I've taken a cold, hard look at the

assemblage of bright, shiny, new and colorful computing machinery on my desktop, and frankly, I'm appalled.

Oh, sure, my spiffy new Graphite Special Edition iBook is a nice-looking machine, with a cool, gray appearance that matches my new Graphite Starbucks Cappuccino Maker and sinfully expensive new Oliver Peoples Graphite Sunglasses. But all my effort to achieve Maximum Cool is hindered by my inability to concoct a realistic scenario wherein I can use all three of the graphite gadgets simultaneously (not to mention pose for publicity photographs while signing autographs).

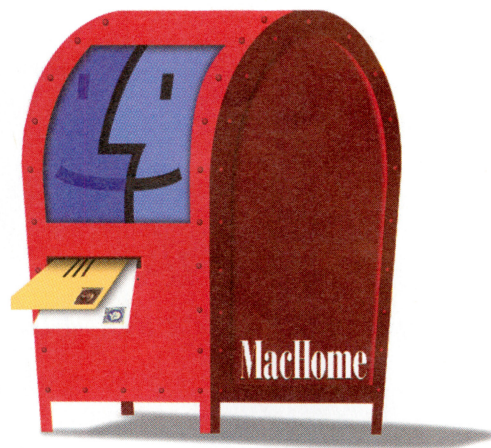
Allow me to make my case by introducing still more gadgetry into the equation: Epson Stylus Color 740i printer, the color of cool Italian Ice. Agfa SnapScan 1212 scanner, the color of the Mediterranean. Entrega hub7U, a dull, muddy, blue-gray USB hub, the color my iBook might have been had Apple gotten it wrong. Iomega Zip 250 drive, a pleasant purple-blue that's fairly close to the scanner but very far indeed from the printer.

Now, I am no color expert, but none of this blue gadgetry matches! It's all different shades of blue! It's like dressing up in an expensive suit, going to a fancy restaurant or nightclub or something, and having a huge food stain in the center of your tie.

I think Apple needs to develop engineering standards for its new colors, and license them to third parties. After Apple opens up the "color architecture," a few courageous companies will no doubt step in, snap up the color licenses, and start churning out fully compatible, Apple-certified-and-licensed, color peripherals.

Excuse me, but I have to go now. I feel a massive, splitting head-AICC coming on.

— Steven Salemi



I read that OS X would get rid of system extensions because they are a big pain. But in reading Spring Cleaning [Editor's Letter, June] by David Weiss, he said they would still be there. Who is right?

— Jim Jones

Actually, Jim, I didn't exactly say that they wouldn't be there, but I realize that I said something very close: that "extensions would probably look very different." Well, now we know that extensions are going to be a thing of the past with OS X (see "OS X: A Look Ahead" page 32). And you can bet that in their place will be something much easier and much more useful as well.

I am an 18-year-old graduating high school senior. First of all, let me say you all have a great Website going, and the information you provide is topnotch.

I have several questions about what kind of computer I should purchase before I go off to college in the fall. I have been a dedicated Mac user since I was born, so there is no doubt a Mac is what I will buy. As I see it now I have two options: a 500 megahertz G3 PowerBook, or a 500 megahertz G4 Desktop model.

I like the idea of portability, but I would really like the new G4 chip since I will have to use this computer for a long time. I have to purchase this computer before or very close to August 10th. Is there any new technology as far as new processors or releases in the

OS I should know about that would help make my decision any easier? Also, how significant is the difference in processing power between the G3 and G4 processors? Will I be able to purchase OS X by then, or is it still in the development stages? I read an article recently saying that someone was producing a DVD-RAM drive for the PowerBook. What are your opinions on that? I would like to have the RAM drive as a way to do large-scale backups and such, but I also plan on having a SuperDisk drive. Is this overkill? My other main considerations are that I am a fairly high-end user. I will want to play lots of video games, run multimedia apps, and do stuff with QuickTime and the Internet. I have heard a lot of different things about the capabilities of a program called Virtual PC. If I wanted to run new computer games or other demanding PC applications, how well would this emulate them to my Macintosh? Or, would I be better off considering purchasing one of the "Orange" cards. That would only be an option, of course, if I got the G4.

— Vic Lindsay

My, my. Where to begin? First of all, check out "Decisions, Decisions" on page 28. If you like portability, go for the PowerBook (This month's Home Office will show you just how expandable it is).

The G4 advantage is huge, but only for a set of specific applications — granted, the list is growing daily, but unless you're heavily involved in image-editing or video work, you might not be able to appreciate the difference that the G4 affords.

As far as what's coming down the pike, Macworld Expo will have revealed some new technology. Also, by that time Apple plans to start shipping a public beta of OS X.

A DVD-RAM is a good addition, since you can use it to watch movies and back up your data — it works similarly to a CD-RW (a recordable and rewritable CD-ROM). A SuperDisk drive and a DVD-RAM is not necessarily overkill, since you can use the SuperDisk drive for 120MB SuperDisks as well as those pesky 1.44MB floppies you might have lying around. If you do go for the G4, the Orange card would most likely be better, since it "is" a PC — but we haven't road-tested these yet.

Correction

In our June review of Pacific Image Electronics' PrimeFilm 1800u Slide Scanner, we mistakenly listed the price as \$299. Ouch! The real estimated street price is \$199.

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Developers Shriek, Apple Listens

While developers raced for the good seats at the San Jose Convention Center, site of May's Apple Worldwide Developers Conference 2000 (WWDC), the real news for consumers is that the release of Mac OS X, the long-awaited new operating system, has experienced a scheduling delay.

Apple iCEO (i stands for Internet, iMac, but certainly not interim) Steve Jobs announced that a "public beta" of Mac OS X would be released by the time Macworld New York rolls around in July. Apple had originally promised the finished product by then. Now, the final version 1.0 will be available in January 2001. No price had been announced as of press time.

So by January 2001 (or Macworld San Francisco, however you mark time), look forward to your Mac having a brand new, and really beautiful

interface with such critical under-the-hood advantages as protected memory, advanced memory management, pre-emptive multitasking, and advanced networking. That means considerably more system stability, flexibility, and power (please see OS X: A Look Ahead on page 32) Mac OS X will run on any native Power Mac G3 or G4 with a minimum of 64MB of RAM. It will not work with upgrade cards, however, Apple says.

Some of the heaviest weights in the business — Adobe, Sun Microsystems, Alias Wavefront, Microsoft, EarthLink, and others — threw their enthusiastic support behind Mac OS X. Some 200 developers have committed to delivering applications for the new operating system since January.

As Mac developers tucked away their precious CD-ROMs containing the new Developer Preview 4 ("DP4" in geek speak, and not available to the press) — accompanied by a Steve Jobs emphatic exhortation to get cracking on updating their programs to run with the new system ("The train is leaving the station," he told them, "the time is now.") — the rest of

us contented ourselves with news and demonstrations of updates and improvements to the Mac OS X interface (Aqua), QuickTime, and QuickTime VR.

Aqua-fied

Mac OS X, particularly its new interface called Aqua, highlight Apple's traditional strength in graphics. Indeed, the system icons are — how shall we say — gorgeous. Yet, Aqua as demonstrated at Macworld 2000 in January left many observers with reservations.

Indeed, after salivating over Aqua's pulsating blue debut, a certain conti-

New Adapter

No yawning, class. Just

because adapters don't seem interesting doesn't mean they're not important. Keyspan is now shipping a USB Parallel

Printer Adapter that lets you connect certain Epson inkjet printers with parallel ports to your USB Mac. They're \$39 and distributed by Ingram Micro. The new Macintosh adapter lets you connect to the Stylus Color 300, 440, 600, 640, 800, and 1520, among others, and is designed to work with printer driver version 5.5.

Keyspan, 510-222-0131, www.keyspan.com



Seeing Colors

We are coming to expect more from our monitors every day, and with that in mind, Mitsubishi is now shipping the LCD 580, a 15" flat panel monitor for \$1,299. This is the first LCD (liquid crystal display) in which Mitsubishi is incorporating its new ColorView technology, designed to enhance the quality of LCD color reproduction.

Mitsubishi says the new desktop LCD now achieves the same kind of color fidelity as its CRT (cath-

ode ray tube) brethren. Because of the increasing demand for digital video and multimedia, ColorView is designed to meet real-time demands of multimedia programs and process a large amount of data.

Mitsubishi, 800-843-2515,

www.mitsubishi-display.com



OS X Watch

gent of users and developers freaked out at the prospect of losing the traditional Macintosh interface we all know and love, which is to say, the desktop, the Apple Menu, and the Application Menu. Apple heeded the clamor. Indeed, Apple says the desktop in the new OS will behave in a familiar manner, allowing you to treat it as you do today's desktop. While the Apple and Application menus are gone, there's the new graphical dock at the bottom of the screen showing icons of open applications, documents, storage devices, windows, and more.

The new OS version shown at WWDC lets you place and arrange aliases on your screen, while system fonts and controls have been scaled back down to their familiar (platinum) dimensions. Observers say that DP4 is definitely more "Mac-like." More radical changes to the operating system, such as using the Finder to preview audio, video, and images, are eagerly awaited.

While there's no question that Aqua and Mac OS X represent a departure from a beloved 16-year tradition, Apple is attempting to make the transition to the Mac OS of the future as seamless as possible.

Just in QuickTime

In other news, WWDC attendees also saw some cool changes planned for Apple's QuickTime, coming out this summer. It will sport a streamlined player as well as the ability to encode and decode MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 (short for Moving Picture Experts Group) video files and stream them over the Internet. It will also support Macromedia's Flash 4 animations and use a version of QDesign software — which takes advantage of the G4 chip — for faster audio encoding.

Jobs also announced a welcome change to QuickTime VR. A new feature called cubic panorama will let you **tilt images** upward toward the sky or downward to the ground, whereas the previous version had limited up and down motion.

Apple, 800-692-7753, www.apple.com

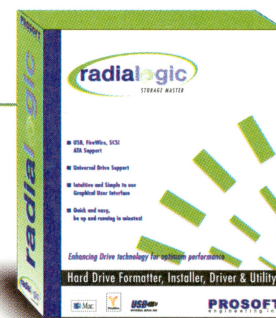
Drive Utilities

Sometimes you just have to make

sure that all your drives and devices are working properly. Enter Radiologic Storage Master from Prosoft Engineering, a set of utilities designed to maximize the performance of your Mac's internal and external drives. It formats, partitions, (slices and dices?) and gives you a range of utilities for both fixed and removable media. This software, which costs \$70, lets

you maintain peak drive performance for all devices on USB, FireWire, SCSI, and ATA buses. A Mac OS X version of the software will be available by the end of the year.

Prosoft Engineering, 925-249-4200, www.prosofteng.com



We Be Jammin'

If you're one of those people who's constantly thinking up cool ways for people to interact with each other via music, images, or online, KB Gear has some new treats in store.

The company has unveiled four new products as part of its "Jam" line. The JamCam 3.0 (\$99), a 640 x 480 digital camera, comes in two metallic colors, and features an expandable memory slot designed to hold up to 64MB MultiMedia cards, automatic flash, and a USB connection. The company is also offering the JamP3 (\$99), a portable MP3 player, which lets you choose your favorite music from the Internet or CDs, sort tunes, and listen for up to an hour.

Jam-It (\$50), a hand-held device, lets you record and add special effects to four minutes of sound, as well as sync sound with your digital images. Jam Studio (\$70), is a Web graphics tool kit featuring a graphics tablet and software you can use to create graphics and Web pages.

KB Gear Interactive, 612-941-1905, www.kbgear.com



My Kid, the Screenwriter

If you're a scriptwriting veteran, or just want to break into the business, some of the more mundane formatting tasks of scriptwriting, as well as immediate worldwide communications among participants, can be achieved with Screenwriter 2000, from Screenplay Systems.

The program, which was released in collaboration with ScriptPerfection Enterprises, is Internet-ready so you can team up with writing partners and others on a creative team regardless of where they are physically located. Using a common Internet connection, you can now work with partners on a script, as well as talk and type, in real time.

And if that's not enough, you can also publish your screenplay in HTML or in Adobe Acrobat PDF format, and register it online at the touch of a button.

Screenplay Systems, 800-847-8679, www.screenplay.com



Do You Hear Voices?

If you use voice-recognition technology, you know that external and distorted noise can cause errors. Macsense is attempting to solve that problem with iParrott, a speech-recognition headset for \$50 with technology designed to give you noise cancelling in the noisiest environments. The iParrott Translator is built directly into the headset to cancel unwanted background sound.

You can use iParrott with voice-recognition software such as IBM's ViaVoice and MacSpeech. You can also use it for Mac OS commands, security applications such as voice print for Mac OS 9, and telephony programs.

Macsense, 800-642-8860, www.macsense.com



On Your Street

If you're a Web designer seeking a good Web authoring tool, one thing you want is choice. You'll get a true alternative with SoftPress Systems' Freeway 3. For \$299, the newest

upgrade has a speed bump particularly in opening and editing large files. The new version also

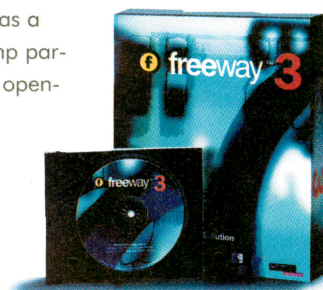
provides some support for AppleScript, giving you the option to automate common tasks. The program facilitates multilingual site production and sports an improved interface for Actions, the company's technology that, among other things, simplifies the building of dynamic database Websites and controls for multimedia content in QuickTime, Shockwave, and Flash. It can now import Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop files and automatically convert them to Web-ready formats.

Improved link map and link-checking features give you a complete overview of all linked pages in your site, and tests external links. Love 'em JavaScript rollovers? A new rollover editor allows 'em to be created easily and intuitively.

SoftPress Systems,

800-853-6454,

www.softpress.com



Laser Sharp

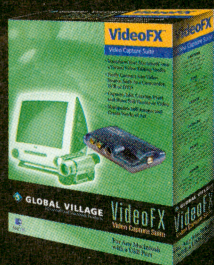
No question about it, laser printers are hot. Lexmark has come out with several monochrome laser printers for consumers and home offices. The Optra E312, a USB printer with a 67MHz processor, prints at 10 pages per minute for \$399. A higher quality model is the Optra M412 for \$799, which prints 17 pages per minute on a 133MHz processor connecting via USB. Both use PostScript emulation software.

If you're looking for something in the way of a color laser, be prepared to fork over a bit more for Lexmark's Optra C710, a 1,200 x 1,200 dpi color laser for \$1,899. You can print in both color and black at a speed of 16 pages per minute in black, and three pages per minute in color. An automatic color-correction technology identifies graphical elements on a page and adjusts itself to the appropriate settings.

Lexmark, 888-539-6275, www.lexmark.com



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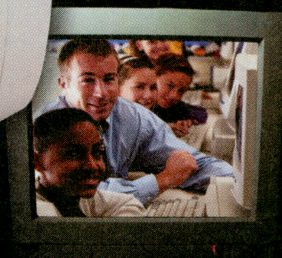
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Burn Baby Burn

By Ross Tibbits

A Roundup of Rewritable CD Drives

There is a good chance you are familiar with CD-ROM drives; you know, those devices you put the shiny silver disks into? So what's all the fuss about CD-RW drives? They are fast becoming as popular as CD-ROMs. Here, we'll teach you all about this high tech media and take five CD-RW drives for a spin. So, let's go!

If you operate a home office or small business, or you want to back up your hard drive, record music, store a series of images, or exchange files, you should take the time to learn more about the latest CD-RWs (Rewritable CDs). *MacHome* regularly introduces external storage devices to our readers because they're so important to have for backup storage purposes and because their prices are falling rapidly. Furthermore, as overall cost continues to drop, performance and features are always improving.



It was only a few years ago that CD-ROM drives were introduced to the mass market. They have been standard equipment on most Macs since the latter days of the Performa. CDs were a great substitute for program files that used to require up to a dozen or more floppy disks — remember Microsoft Word 6.0? Now all of these huge

programs could be copied onto one single CD.

Next came the recordable CD, called CD-Rs. These were different from standard CD-ROM drives in that they could be recorded onto, giving the consumer greater flexibility with the kind of data they wanted on their CDs. In fact, this allowed consumers an efficient and space-saving method to archive old files. As much as 650MB of data could be stored for between 75 and 200 years! Floppy disks, by contrast, have a lifespan of between 15 to 30 years and are far more vulnerable to damage.

Today, the latest generation of CD drives is known as CD-RWs. These rewritable CD drives provide even greater flexibility when storing data. You can now record over old data, and use your CDs in the same way many have used floppies and hard drives in the past: to back-up important data on a regular basis. CD-RWs can be re-written up to 999 times and are designed to last 30 years. Like CD-Rs, they can also be used to store audio tracks. Thus, the CD-RWs incorporate all the features that their predecessors offered. One of the most attractive things about CD-RWs is their cost.

You can purchase a package of 50 CD-RW disks for as little as \$50, making them one of the least expensive media on the market when you look at cost per MB of storage, which in this case is \$1 for 650 MB!

For a long time CD-RW drives seemed to be used only by computer programmers or the technically adept. Furthermore, the drives were primarily made for PCs. Obviously, the wait is now over for Mac users. We can choose from a variety of CD-RW drives. Better yet, we don't have to know how to program a computer to use them. Adaptec's Toast, a user friendly program designed to help you record text, graphics, images, or music onto your CD-RWs, is standard with all of these drives. The drives also come standard with all the necessary connector cables,

be they USB, FireWire, or Ultra SCSI, and they throw in one blank CD-R and CD-RW each to get you started.

Drive Speeds

Before you go out and buy a CD-RW you should know a little something about drive speeds.

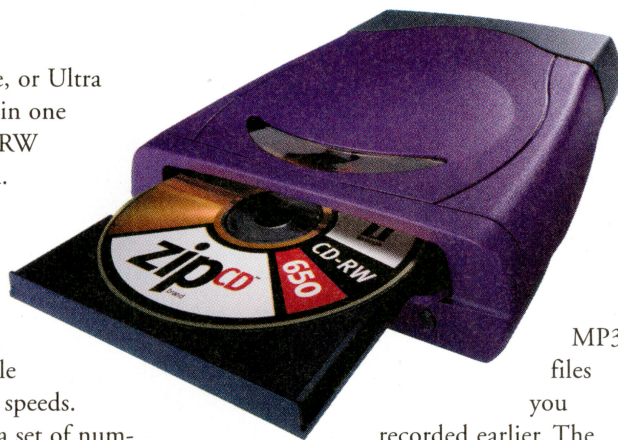
Typically, you will see a set of numbers associated with a particular drive. 8X4X24X, 2X4X24X, or 4X4X6X, and so on. These numbers represent the speed at which the drive will spin the disk, depending on the function it is performing. Because CD-RWs perform three different functions, you should read their model names as 8X speed, 4X speed, and 24X speed. This can be a bit confusing, so read on.

Today, the latest generation of CD drives is known as CD-RWs

The first number represents the write speed, which is the speed at which data can be recorded onto the CD. This is what would happen if you used it to back up your hard drive. This is also called burning, because the drive's laser actually burns minute pits into the surface, altering its crystalline structure.

The second number is the speed at which the drive can rewrite data over previously written data. The laser does this by changing the alignment of the crystalline structure in the CD-RW. If, for example, you wanted to erase your current collection of MP3 files and replace them with a new selection, you'd be rewriting the CD-RW.

Lastly, you have the read speed. This is the speed at which your drive can read data that has been burned onto it, such as when you are playing those



MP3 files you

recorded earlier. The drive looks for the reflection, or lack thereof, of laser light that has been directed at the CD. By contrast, if you decide to erase your CD-RW, the laser device will realign the crystalline structure and make it uniform once again. Today's models frequently operate at read speeds comparable to your standard CD-ROM drive and thus can be used as a replacement for the CD-ROM drive in your computer.

The speed at which the CD-RW drive writes, rewrites, and reads may vary. But our tests showed mixed results when we tested models with the same speeds. Often, these differences were minimal, but it is something to be aware of when purchasing a CD-RW drive.

Media

All CD-RWs will be able to read the three different kinds of CDs I've already written about: CD-ROM, CD-R, and CD-RW. If you are burning CDs you'll be using either CD-Rs or CD-RWs. It is important to know that CD-Rs can be written to (recorded onto) at any speed — 4X, 6X, 8X, etc. If on the other hand you want to burn on a CD-RW, then you must purchase CD-RW disks that are made to write at the speed equivalent to your drive. Typically, write speeds will be displayed on the CD-RW disk, so if you want maximum writing performance from your CD-RWs, take note of this. If you have an 8X drive with a 6X disk inside, the maximum speed at which you will record is 6X.

Making the Connection

You will find that there are many connection devices used with CD-RW drives. For our sampling, we have chosen devices running off of FireWire, USB, and Ultra SCSI connections. There are differences between each of these, and depending on the computer you have and your specific needs, you will need to choose the one that is right for you. Of course, their primary difference is speed. FireWire can transfer data at a rate of 400 Megabits/second (Mbps), while USB is considerably slower moving at 12 Mbps, and Ultra SCSI fits towards the middle at 160 Mbps.

Newer G3 and G4 Macs will already have FireWire and USB ports built in. You may have to install a FireWire or USB card into your older Mac to support a CD-RW device. Ultra SCSI is relatively new and does not come standard with Macs, requiring you to purchase an Ultra SCSI card, which can cost as much as \$350. Of course, if you have one already installed, this is not an issue.

Despite the differences in the data transfer rates of the peripheral connec-

tions, the fact remains that the CD-RW can only process data at a set speed, minimizing differences in connection speed. Therefore, you should see what your Mac supports and go from there.

Time Trials

When testing the five CD-RW drives, I wanted to get a feeling for their ability to work with a variety of data, so I used one 116MB Photoshop file, and a collection of small SimpleText files

totaling 176 MB. Because all of the drives have the same re-write speed, I used CD-RW disks and performed re-writes to sample speeds. Following this procedure, I timed their

Read speeds. Because four out of five drives have read speeds of 8X, it is safely assumed that the Rewrite speed will be halved by these drives when using a CD-R or a new CD-RW.

Test Driving the Drives

CRW8424SZX

Yamaha is known as the standard-bearer of CD drives, and many claim others try to match its expertise and performance. The \$379 CRW8424SZX's long, narrow

rectangular box is very utilitarian looking in its back-to-basics beige. This theme continues on the front, where you'll find the basic On/Off and Eject buttons, and headphone jack with volume control.

Because this is an Ultra SCSI device, there is a SCSI terminator switch and an associated CDR ID switch. This allows you to give the drive a specific ID so your computer can locate it when you are using more than one SCSI device. You will also find the audio inputs in the back.

Like the others, the CRW8424SZX comes with the Adaptec Toast software, one blank CD-RW, one blank CD-R, and an Ultra SCSI cable.

Rewrites went slowly, taking close to 30 seconds longer to rewrite than the Que!, which I'll cover a little further on. The CRW8424SZX read speed was excellent, however turning in the second fastest speed.

Eclipse FireWire

BellStor's expensive \$480 Eclipse turns at speeds of 8X4X32X, and was clearly influenced by the iMac color scheme. In this case, I don't think it was such a good thing, primarily because the unit's core, or the part that actually accepts the CD, is an off-the-shelf beige component. Surrounding this is a facade of Bondi Blue, and a clear, translucent



Drive	Manufacturer	Speed	Price	Controls	Average Rewrite, 116MB	Average Read, 176MB	Connectivity	Rating
Boa FireWire	EZQuest Inc. 714-694 0031 www.ezq.com	8X4X24	\$399	Excellent	5:37	2:27	FireWire	★★★★
CRW8424SZX	Yamaha 800-492-6242 www.yamaha.com	8X4X24X	\$379	Very Good	5:40	2:04	Ultra SCSI	★★★★
Eclipse FireWire	Bell Microproducts 800-800-1513 www.bellmicro.com	8X4X32	\$480	Very Good	11:21	2:22	FireWire	★★★
Que!	QPS 800-559-4777 www.qps-inc.com	8X4X32	\$399	Excellent	5:15	1:95	FireWire	★★★★½
ZipCD	Iomega 888-446-6342 www.iomega.com	4X4X6	\$279	Fair	5:38	5:18	USB	★★★★

body around the rest of the unit. It's supported by four rubbery feet that are functional but don't

quite match the Bondi Blue facade.

The Eclipse comes with Adaptec's Toast software, connecting FireWire cable, and one blank CD-R/RW.

Beyond the box, this unit's front end features a power button, power-on light, headphone jack, volume control, eject button, and an activity indicator telling you which task it's performing. On the back of the unit there are two FireWire jacks (for connecting additional FireWire peripherals), stereo audio inputs, and a removable power cord.

The performance of the Eclipse was mixed — it was very slow at rewriting data, and technical support could provide no solution to the quandary. The Eclipse took twice as long to rewrite the same files as did the comparable Que! By contrast, the Eclipse's read speed was almost exactly the same as the Que!, reading minutely slower in only one instance.

Boa FireWire

This 8X4X24 unit has a beige drive, surrounded by a cool shell — in this case a clear, translucent one. The front end of this \$399 drive has lights that will always let you know what the drive is doing. A power light sits next to a status light that displays disk activity. An additional light nearer the CD drawer is the primary activity light, and next to that is a writing indicator. There is also a volume control for the headphone jack adjacent to it.

On the back there's a power switch, two FireWire ports, audio inputs, an extra outlet, and an extra port for additional connective cards.

In our tests, The Boa FireWire showed competent rewrite and read speeds. When compared to the CRW8424SZX, it rewrites at slightly faster speeds in both tests, completing its task between 10 and 40 seconds faster.

During the read test, just the opposite was true. The CRW8424SZX edged out the Boa by a margin of between 20 and 30 seconds. Truth be told, these are minimal difference that most people without stopwatches are not going to notice. but, it is important to know how these drives actually perform.

Que!

Edging out Iomega, which I'm about to get to, in the simplicity of design department is the Que! (pronounced cue). This 8X4X32X drive, made by QPS, has an organic-shaped case that makes you want to pick it up. It even sports rubberized ridges on its sides. There is only an eject button, headphone jack, and volume control on the front. Turning it around, you will find two FireWire ports, a power-in socket, and an on/off switch.



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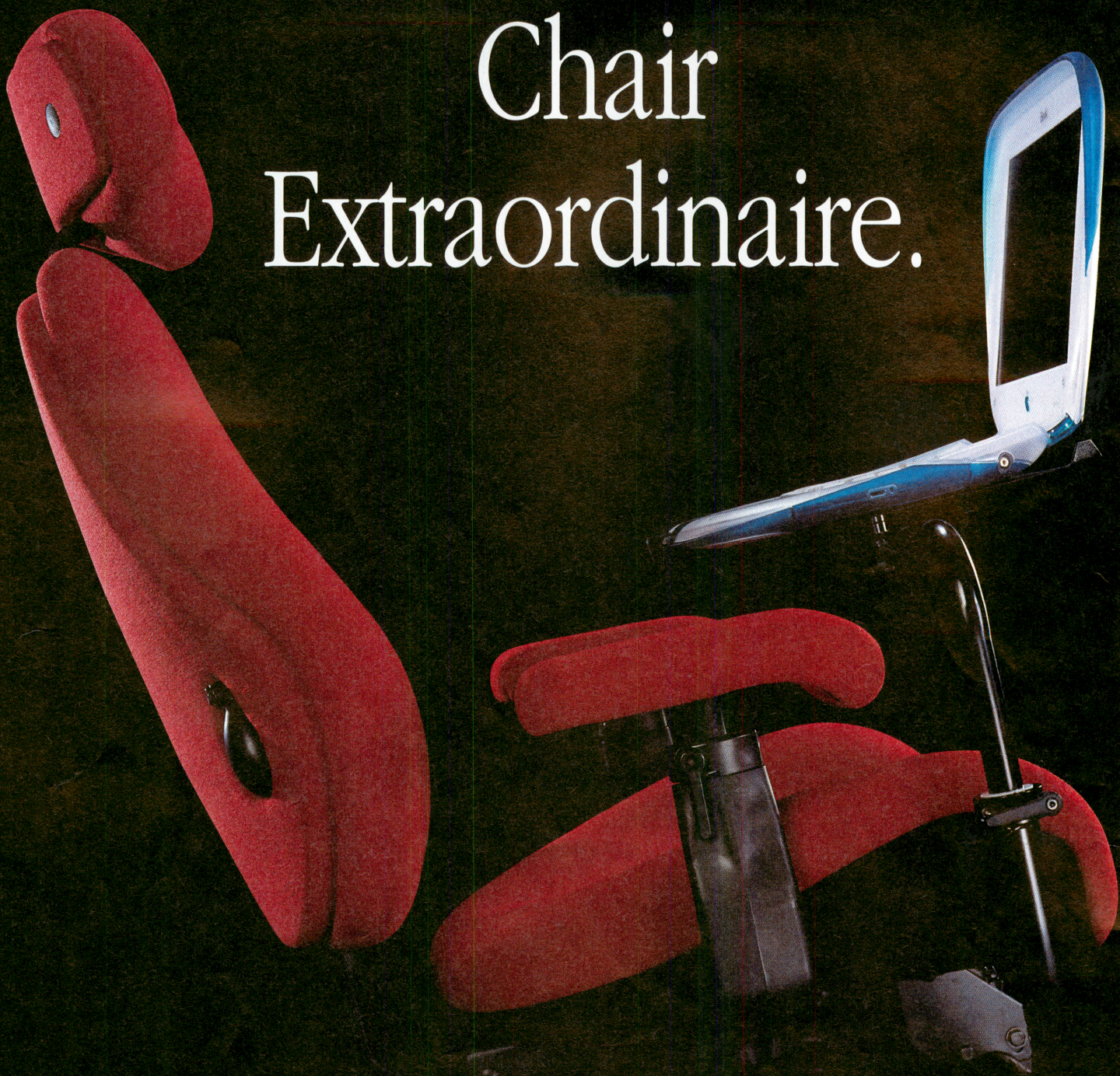
*After core rebate; see website for details.

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BODYBILT

From Space To The Workplace



With this \$399 drive you also get a nice carrying case, a very well written manual, the Toast software, one blank CD-R and RW disk, and the appropriate FireWire and DC power cables.

The Que! was one of the fastest overall when rewriting data. It was only edged out in one test by a single drive, the Boa. In one of the reading tests it finished as many as 27 seconds faster than similar drives, but in the other read test it was beat by all drives of the same speed by as much as 30 seconds.

ZipCD 650

The \$280 Iomega stands out from the pack because it is a striking purple, not unlike a particular dinosaur that you may know from television. But the purpose of this drive is more important than its color. This is one of the simplest, most clean-cut drives of the bunch. Its facade is uncluttered, with only a power button, activity light, eject light, headphone input, and volume control.

The back of this slim drive features a USB port, power switch, and audio inputs. Unlike the other, heftier models, it doesn't have a fan, which makes this the quietest model tested.

Rewriting data on the Iomega results in very competitive times. In one test it was faster than all but one of the other drives, while in another it turned out a speed equivalent to the group's average. The read speeds, however, turned out to be almost exactly twice as slow as the other drives. But, considering that it only turns at 6X, this is not too bad.

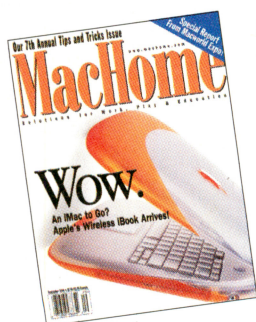
Which One's for You?

The drives I have sampled here represent a wide range of price, features, speed and design. For those of you interested in the very practical, the Iomega ZipCD 650 will suit you just fine. Its ease of use, coupled and its great price, outweigh its slower read speeds. If you find



that you are more interested in actually replacing your current CD-ROM drive with a CD-RW, I would suggest something that will read at higher speeds so that you can get the most performance out of your drive. The Eclipse, which may have looked like a good choice from a performance standpoint, had the slowest rewrite speed of all and was the most expensive of the group. And, although the CRW8424SZX has excellent read speeds, it has slow write speeds and it requires an expensive Ultra SCSI card. Of the two strongest performers — Que! and Boa — the Que! comes out as the clear winner because of its excellent performance and the added carrying case. **MHJ**

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Home Choice Awards

From the Editors of *MacHome*

It's that time of year again —

no, not the time for swimming, sailing, and drinking beer. Don't be silly! It's time for the *MacHome* Home Choice Awards 2000. And that's ever so much more fun.

We at *MacHome* world headquarters in San Francisco consider ourselves to be among the most privileged folks on the planet because we are generally among the first to see, hear, play with, and evaluate the newest hardware and software that comes down the pike for the Mac.

And judging by the diversity of winning entries, we are also the pickiest, most opinionated lot around. But in the end, it was the products that brought us together at last.



Product of the Year: Apple Power Mac G4 500

Is this a no-brainer or what? It may not be the cheapest thing around: this system will set you back a cool \$3,499, but it certainly is the fastest, and as we all know, time is money. Says news editor Jackie Dove, "There's nothing ambiguous about the brilliance of the Power Mac G4, and it is the totally obvious choice for this category. The second it was introduced, I knew

it was the most brilliant piece of work I had ever seen. There's nothing better, faster, sleeker, and more elegant."

That was seconded by contributing writer Cathy Parise: "G4 500 MHz with DVD is the perfect home or office solu-

tion. Plenty of power, great speed, options that take it to the 21st century with you. A great machine!"

Apple, 800-692-7753, www.apple.com

Desktop System: Apple iMac DV

While there was some spirited debate over this one — and we managed to clean the blood off the conference room table — the iMac DV won fair and square. While not the overall best product of the year, its accessibility, and particularly its price (a mere \$1,299 for a 400MHz processor, 64MB of RAM, FireWire, etc.), not to mention its fruit flavors, simply won us over.

Says contributing writer Chris McVeigh, "The iMac DV revolutionized Apple's low-end, rolling DVD, FireWire, and Rage 128 into a colorful package for just \$1,299. Although the Power Macintosh G4 may be classified as a weapon, it's the iMac DV that led Apple to victory." 'Nuff said.

Apple, 800-692-7753, www.apple.com

Portable System: Apple G3 PowerBook 500

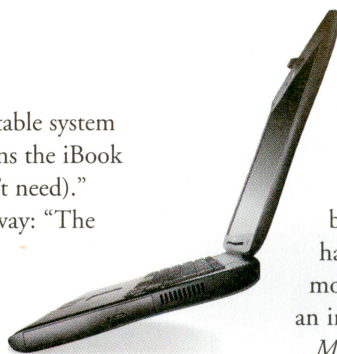
It almost isn't a fair fight ... almost. If there is one thing our editors could unanimously agree on, it was that the G3 PowerBook — either in the 400MHz (\$2,499) or 500MHz (\$3,499) incarnation — was the best of the portables. Well, no wonder! It's light, it's sleek, it's sophisticated, and it's way fast. Though some staffers felt obliged to tip their hats to the iBook, none preferred it.

Typical of such comments was one by Parise: "Though I love the new graphite iBook SE, the newer PowerBook is

still the best overall portable system because it has the options the iBook doesn't have (and doesn't need)."

McVeigh put it this way: "The iBook may wow the crowds with its curvaceous design and bright colors, but it's the PowerBook G3 that truly stands out. A big, bright display, built-in DVD, Rage 128 graphics coprocessor, and built-in FireWire distinguish the PowerBook from its pretty little sister."

Apple, 800-692-7753, www.apple.com



price of \$180. Says contributing writer Gene Steinberg, "Yes, there are bigger, faster drives, and perhaps a CD writer might be more reliable, but the Zip is an industry standard."

MacHome editor David Weiss put it thusly: "There are a few FireWire Zip drives out there, but they're still a bit on the expensive side. Iomega's Zip 250 USB is quite svelte, it's relatively speedy for USB, and 250MB is nothing to sneeze at."

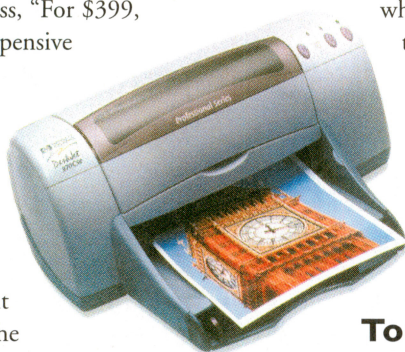
Iomega, 800-697-8833, www.iomega.com

Color Printer: Hewlett-Packard DeskJet 970Cse

Several of us at MacHome are very enthusiastic about this printer, and we are generally very fussy when it comes to printers. Says Weiss, "For \$399, it's a bit on the expensive side for an inkjet, but this has a lot going for it. It can adjust its own heads if they slip out of alignment, it allows you to print on both sides of the paper, and although it positively shines when it uses photo paper, it still produces incredible output on regular old bond."

Steinberg agrees, "This printer is positively amazing for the price. Crisp, bright color, and ultra-sharp text, rivaling that of a regular laser printer. At less than \$400, it's a steal."

Hewlett-Packard, 800-752-0900, www.hp.com



Monochrome Laser Printer: Hewlett-Packard LaserJet

There may be some differences in model numbers when it comes to best monochrome laser printer, but what we all do agree on is the brand. And the winner is ... an HP LaserJet of some variety.

Hewlett-Packard, 800-752-0900, www.hp.com

Scanner: Agfa SnapScan Touch

Several of us were enthusiastic about the quality, ease of use, and price (\$129) of the Agfa SnapScan Touch. Weiss' comment typifies the general consensus: "No, it doesn't provide the highest resolution. No, it isn't the fastest. But boy, is this one heck of a fun, easy scanner to use. Just press a button to have it scan, optimize, and crop an image, then embed it in an open email message. Now how cool is that?"

Agfa, 888-281-2302, www.agfahome.com

Removable Storage: Iomega ZIP 250

While there are a variety of removable storage products on the market, the far-and-away favorite of the MacHome legions is the Iomega Zip 250 USB drive, affectionately referred to by associate editor Carolyn Blackburn as "Zip." Indeed, the Zip is practically ubiquitous, selling as it does for the reasonable

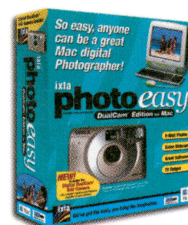
Word Processor: Microsoft Word

The hands-down, take-no-prisoners winner is Microsoft Word. It used to be that you used Microsoft word because you had to, because everyone (except you) seemed to be using it. For Dove, who

"You know, you can afford to e-mail your Nana a picture once in a while!"



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Digital Camera

Tie: Ricoh and Canon

There was a knock-down, drag out slugfest over this one, but we finally made the tough call: a tie. Now stay calm. A partisan for the Ricoh team, editor David Weiss puts it this way: "Ricoh RDC-5300, for \$699, simply rocks. It's got 8MB of memory right in the camera itself, but of course you can also add SmartMedia cards. It's got a cover for the LCD that slides open when you turn the camera on. But best of all, just plug it into your Mac's USB port and it pops up on your desktop just like a disk, making downloading pictures as easy as copying files."

But reviews editor Ross Tibbits respectfully dissents from the collective wisdom with this missive for the Canon PowerShot S20: "The first time I saw this camera I was immediately impressed by its stellar looks and compact size. Taking pictures with it was a snap and the high resolution viewing screen gives you a great sharp and crisp image. The software that comes with this small wonder makes organizing and editing your images a breeze."

Take your pick. We like 'em both!

Ricoh, 800-225-1899, www.ricohcpg.com

Canon, 800-652-2666, www.usa.canon.com



like some hopeless diehard clings tenaciously to her WordPerfect 3.5 to the bitter end, this, alas, is still true.

But it seems that most staffers here hold something like the view of contributing writer Jeff Battersby, who expresses a typical ambivalence with Microsoft as a company (which many of us still share), but states, "Microsoft Word makes my job as a writer amazingly easy (not to mention that my former favorite, AppleWorks, while still quite good, lacks Word's basic strengths, and now seems to appeal

more to the Kiddy set)."

Resident skeptic McVeigh remarks: "It's a small victory for Microsoft, however, since Word 98 was virtually the only entry in the race. Think, *The Tortoise and the Hare* without the hare." Hmm. Microsoft, 425-882-8080, www.microsoft.com

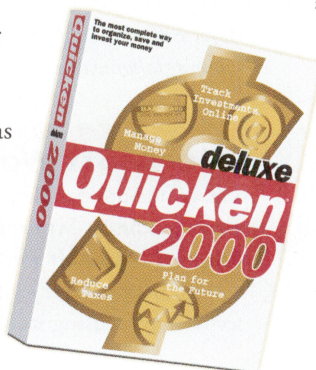
Shareware: StuffIt Expander 5.5

You know how when you download compressed files from the Internet or email, they automatically expand, as if by magic? Well, that ain't magic, sisters and brothers, but the ubiquitous StuffIt Expander. Says McVeigh, "Let's face it. None of us can live without Aladdin's StuffIt Expander. It should really be an integrated component of the Mac OS."

Aladdin Systems, 831-761-6200, www.aladdinsys.com

Personal Finance: Quicken 2000

This has been the pick in this category for a couple of years running and we at MacHome would like to thank Intuit for being there for us. Plus, the 2000 version has a lot of improvements! Intuit, 800-446-8848, www.quicken2000.com



Web Authoring Tool: Adobe GoLive 4

There are many Web-authoring programs, but if you like the Adobe interface, and if you think that dragging and dropping is some kind of healthy upper body aerobics, then Adobe GoLive is your tool for Web building. It was the overwhelming choice of our staff.

Adobe, 800-833-6687, www.adobe.com

Web Browser: Microsoft Internet Explorer 5

As loyalty to Netscape and the bright light of iCab gradually fade, they are overtaken by the awesome power and beauty of Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5. You read correctly.

Free, dauntingly attractive, astonishingly swift, IE 5 has endeared itself to our editors. Says Battersby, "Hands down the best browser on the market. Looks good. Works great. And I'm going to be really disappointed when the Justice Department starts making Microsoft start charging for it."

Microsoft, 425-882-8080, www.microsoft.com

Email Application: Microsoft Outlook Express 5

In this category, Microsoft was the hands-down winner. No other contenders.

Dove weighs in with an overwhelming endorsement: "I really love Outlook Express 5. This is the most flexible emailer I have ever used and it has all of the functions that you'll ever want. Absolutely everything is drag and drop, navigating between folders, handling mail, everything. It's easy, intuitive, fun to look at and a genuine pleasure to operate.

It's a real category killer."
Microsoft, 425-882-8080, www.microsoft.com

Input Device: Microsoft IntelliMouse

The hands-down favorite of our staff is the Microsoft IntelliMouse. (Microsoft, again!?) As Steinberg

A word about

Microsoft, and no smirking! Microsoft won best software product in several categories of this year's Home Choice Awards, but it was not without reservations. Some staffers, though they harbor residual anti-Microsoft feelings, did not let their emotions rule their decision.

puts it, "It's comfortable, programmable, and you don't even need a mouse pad. I can even forgive the fact that it has Microsoft's name on it."

Tibbits also raves, "Microsoft's latest entry into the mousecapades is an excellent contender. This amazing mouse has no trackball! Its movement is tracked with a tiny electronic eye that sees the direction it's going. No more cleaning your mouse now!"

Microsoft, 425-882-8080,
www.microsoft.com

Utility: Alsoft DiskWarrior

This disk-repair utility got lots of votes from our staff for doing its job — repairing and preventing damage to hard disks — so well. Says contributing writer Michael Eilers, "DiskWarrior 2.0 is a quick, one-click solution to faster, more stable hard drives — what it lacks in whiz-bang features, it makes up for with great results."

Alsoft, 800-257-6381, www.alfsoft.com

Image Editor

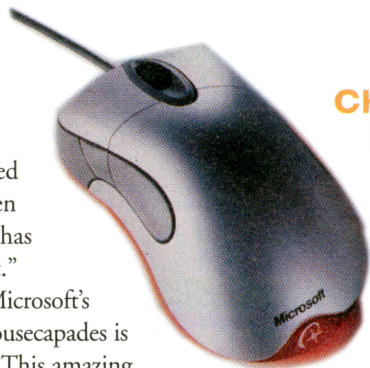
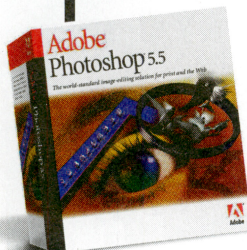
Adobe Photoshop 5.5

Says crack Photoshop expert Chris McVeigh, "There are pretenders to the throne, to be sure, but at the end of the day it's Adobe Photoshop that reigns supreme."

News editor Jackie Dove couldn't agree more, commenting, "The newest version of Photoshop provides digital artists as well as Web

designers a fluid functionality that covers nearly every task. The combination of ImageReady 2 in the program allows you to construct JavaScript Rollovers and animated GIFs, and that is so convenient for digital artists who are also Web designers."

Adobe, 800-833-6687,
www.adobe.com



Children's Learning: Blue's Treasure Hunt

MacHome's resident games expert, associate editor Carolyn

Blackburn, expressed warm feelings for *Blue's*

Treasure Hunt by Humongous. "If a computer game must serve as babysitter a couple times a week, I trust this one will take top-notch care of your kiddies. It's entertaining, educational, and allows young players to wander from screen to screen without rules, therefore catering to their inherent curiosity," she says, and we all agreed. How can you go wrong? Humongous, 800-499-8386,
www.humongous.com

Family Game: Photo Hunt in Yellowstone

Blackburn liked this game so much that she proposed a whole new category for it. "Over the next year I hope to see more titles like *Photo Hunt in Yellowstone*. I like the idea of family titles: if kids are drawn to computer games, there should be titles that mom and dad can throw into the mix for some quality time. I think the whole family will get a kick out of *Photo Hunt in Yellowstone*, which offers an informative and giggle-inducing look at nature in the setting of one of our grandest national parks."

True North Studios, 800-668-6717,
www.photohunt.com

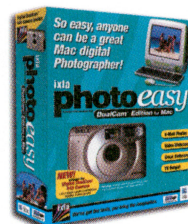
Children's Game: Super Duper Arcade 1 and 2

Sometimes it's just nice to let the kids be kids; to let them play without worrying whether they learned enough French or geography today. Super Duper Arcade 1 and 2 will do it for them. Says Blackburn, "Humongous Entertainment offers a troupe of their cuties for fun and games in Super Duper Arcade 1 and 2. The kids'll love playing with Freddy Fish, Pajama Sam, and Putt Putt in sev-

"Some say it was a miracle. I knew it was IXLA."



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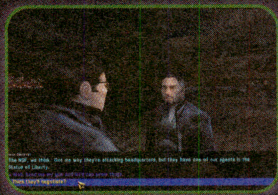
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Monitor

Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 91



"This is one hot monitor," says news editor Jackie Dove. "At 19 inches, you have all the screen real estate you need, but

this monitor features a beautiful resolution and color saturation on a flat-face CRT. It's a total pleasure."

Mitsubishi, 800-843-2515,
www.mitsubishi-display.com,

eral arcade-style games, all non-violent, and all highly repeatable."

Humongous, 800-499-8386,
www.humongous.com

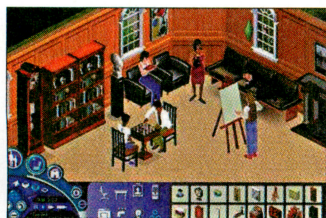
Simulation Game: The Sims (Coming Soon!)

Now we know it's a really tough call to judge a simulation game that isn't out yet — isn't it? Yet our editors had no trouble separating the hype from the, well, hype, and voting for *The Sims*. We are so excited about Aspyr's porting *The Sims* to the Mac, (and, to be fair, have seen it in action using Virtual PC) that we are confident in saying that this one is going to be totally hot.

Weiss comments, "No, it's not quite out yet for Mac, but it will be soon. And what a weird, quirky, intriguing game it's sure to be!"

Says gaming whiz Blackburn, "On the strength of its previews, its hype, and its predicted billing in pop culture gossip, *The*

Sims wins hands-down. Do we, the players, wrap our Sims around our fingers, or do they wrap us around theirs? At large for the Mac by mid-July, (hopefully!) this



one's stage is set for a very long run."
Aspyr, 888-212-7797, www.aspyr.com

Role Playing Game: Clan Lord

Says Hot Tips Editor Pat St-Arnaud, "It's fun. It may not have a beautiful interface, but it's a huge, unusually detailed world with a lot of possibilities. It has extensive playability and you get to meet people and be sociable."

Delta Tao Software, 800-827-9316,
www.clanlord.com

Strategy Game: Railroad Tycoon II Gold Edition

Our favorite is *Railroad Tycoon II Gold Edition* for its non-violent content and educational orientation. Says contributing writer Rafi Guroian, "Next to model railroad-

ing, *Railroad Tycoon II: Gold Edition* is the most fun you'll ever have with miniature trains.



"The game combines strategy, economic theory, and the sheer 'coolness' of trains to create a highly addictive simulation of railroading throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

"On more than one occasion I left the computer thinking I had spent only an hour or two playing, where in reality, my face had been glued to the computer screen for more than seven."
Gathering of Developers, 214-303-1202,
www.godgames.com

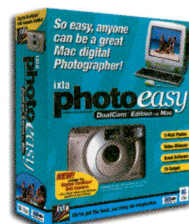
Overall Cool Tool: Apple iMovie

It's free. It's easy. It's fun. It's the digital video craze. Says Guroian, "Never before have I been able to create such entertaining, professional, and humorous video presentations in such a small amount of time with such ease. And all it cost me was a free download."
Apple, 800-692-7753,
www.apple.com **MHJ**

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DECISIONS,



Decisions

How to **Choose** the **Right Mac**

Congratulations! You've already made the most important decision — to buy a Mac, the easiest-to-use and fastest personal computer on the planet. Now it's just a matter of picking the right fruit from the tree.

What Do You Need?

Most home users want to surf the Web, play games, write letters, keep track of finances, use digital cameras, and manage MP3 files. Some may also want to be able to edit home videos, or get a portable machine that can travel between home and school. These consumers will likely be deciding between the various models of iMac and iBook.

Professionals and high-end consumers, on the other hand, depend on their machines for a living, and need more performance, display, and expansion options than you can get from an iMac or iBook. They often engage in activities such as Web site creation, spreadsheet and database work, desktop publishing and graphic design, music composition, video editing, financial accounting, marketing presentations and so on. Power Macs and PowerBooks will be their likely weapons of choice.

When you make your list of what you want to do with your new Mac, be sure to include things you may be interested in doing in the future, since you'll want it to last at least two or three years.

If you come from the PC world, and are buying your first Mac, it's also worth noting several things that are standard in every Mac, that often cost extra in a PC. Macs come with CD-quality sound capture and playback, and have both mic and headphone jacks. Next, all Macs have 10/100 Base-T Ethernet ports for easy networking. Finally, all new Macs include a slot for Apple's revolutionary AirPort card (\$99), a wireless networking system that works with the \$299 AirPort Base Station. With AirPort you can roam around your home or office with your iBook or PowerBook, and there's no need for unsightly wiring. You can even hook up PCs to an AirPort network.

Those on a budget should also consider used or factory-refurbished machines. Great selections of used Macs can be found on sites like eBay and Yahoo classifieds, while refurbs are available from both Apple and major mail order houses like Warehouse.com and Outpost.com. "Last year's model" will often be the very best deal you can get in a computer, and both used and refurbished machines often come with warranties. Used portables are less desirable than used desktops since they are subject to a lot more abuse. Don't get anything older than a G3, however, since OS X is coming soon, and it's not guaranteed to work with pre-G3 Macs (nor Macs with third-party G3 cards).

Now that you've figured out what you want to use your new Mac for, let's look at the options more closely.

The Many Flavors of iMac

iMacs come in three models: base, DV and DV Special Edition. The base model, at \$999, is the cheapest new Mac you can buy. Even so, it will handle all the home-user tasks mentioned above with aplomb, thanks to its 350MHz G3 processor and 6GB hard drive. It's perfect for homework, games, personal finance, Web surfing, and working with digital cameras and MP3 files. It's also an inexpensive solution for small businesses and home offices doing light desktop publishing, accounting, contact management and so on.

The only option you have with a base iMac is how much RAM to get. We recommend getting a 64MB upgrade (to 128MB) for all but those with limited needs. Web surfing, MP3 and video playback, image editing and desktop publishing will all benefit from the extra memory. Many resellers even offer this upgrade free with all new iMacs.

In spite of their names, the iMac DV and DV Special Edition are not just for those who want to do digital video editing. The principal differences from the base model are the addition of two FireWire ports, a faster 400MHz processor, a DVD-ROM drive, VGA output, and a bigger hard disk (see the next page, for more on these terms). FireWire ports allow connection of DV camcorders, but are also good for other high-speed peripherals like disk drives and scanners. The

base iMac has only two ways of communicating with the outside world — through Ethernet networking and USB, and USB peripherals are very slow compared to FireWire.

The DVD-ROM drive in the iMac DVs is another very useful addition. For now, it's mostly for playing DVD movies, but more and more games are coming out on DVD. And the VGA and audio out ports allow you to hook the iMac DV up to your big-screen TV and stereo, so you can get the full home-theater experience. This feature alone is worth the \$300 price difference.

The iMac DV Special Edition adds even more RAM (it's got 128MB) and disk space (13GB, total), and comes in the exclusive Graphite color.

The Kid-Tough iBook

The iBook is a great solution for students, space-conscious telecommuters, and travelers on a budget. Just slightly slower than an iMac at 300MHz, the 6.6-lb. iBook has the same 64MB RAM and 6GB hard disk, as well as the usual 56K modem. It's also got a specially designed tough case, able to withstand backpack abuse.

However, the screen is slightly smaller, at 12.1 inches diagonal compared to 13.8 inches on the iMac, and has a maximum resolution of 800 x 600, versus 1,024 x 768 on the iMac. It is also not as expandable, lacking any provision for DVD, FireWire or even a bigger hard disk. Admittedly, these items are "frills" for most people, but your MP3 and video-loving teen will likely feel cramped. For \$200 extra, you can also get the 366MHz Special Edition iBook in Graphite, but we'd rather it offered a bigger hard disk or a FireWire port.

G4: The Power Tower

Despite its popularity and versatility, the iMac has a lot of limitations, notably its fixed screen size and relative paucity of expansion options. That's why the entry-level Power Mac G4, at just \$1,599, should appeal to many who would otherwise buy an iMac. Need a big screen for desktop publishing? No problem. Need SCSI for compatibility with older Mac peripherals or superfast hard disks? Just add a PCI card. Need an old-style Mac serial port for use with your MIDI music equipment? Get a GeeThree Stealth Serial port for the G4 (www.geethree.com). Want to add an internal CD recorder for making your own music CDs? There's plenty of space in a G4.

Moving up the G4 ladder principally means paying big premiums (\$1,000–\$2,000) for faster processors and bigger hard disks. Unless you're doing professional work in demanding areas like desktop publishing and multimedia, you might not need the faster CPUs. In normal operations like Web surfing and word processing, you will be hard-pressed to tell the difference. If you need a bigger hard disk or more RAM, just buy it separately (or use the build-to-order option at the Apple online store, at www.apple.com).

The Perfect PowerBook

In many ways, the new PowerBook is the ultimate Mac. It's got a big, bright 14.1-inch screen, performance rivaling the G4 tower, DVD, FireWire, both VGA and S-video outputs (for connecting big monitors, TVs and projectors), and lots of storage and expansion options. There's literally not much you can do on a G4 that you can't do on a PowerBook. And that includes demanding applications



BY BECKY WARING

such as professional desktop publishing and video editing (see this month's Home Office article).

And of course the PowerBook goes anywhere, thanks to its 5-hour battery (more like 3.5 hours in real life, but still excellent). You can even use two batteries for a cross-country plane trip.

The PowerBook is up to serious work. It's a great desktop replacement for mobile professionals, especially those who need to give presentations (with its video output capability). It's also a good choice for home users who also telecommute occasionally, or use a Mac at the office. With the PowerBook's FireWire disk mode (Restart and hold down the "t" key), you can attach it to an iMac DV or G4 and it will appear on the desktop just like a second hard disk.

The PowerBook offers two processor choices: 400MHz and 500MHz, but again, only the most demanding pros or those with no budget will choose the faster processor, which costs \$1,000 more.

Common Features Explained

Processor — There are two types of processors in today's crop of Macs: The G3 and G4. The G3 has been around since the first Power Mac Minitorwer three years ago, although it has gotten a

chores, but a lot faster at certain processes, such as audio and video tasks that make use of the Velocity Engine.

Cache — iMacs and iBooks each have 512KB of "back-side Level 2 cache," while Power Mac G4s and PowerBooks have 1MB (double the amount). Caches are used to temporarily store data as it is fed into the processor, and larger caches therefore speed up overall processor performance. The effect is most noticeable with processor-intensive operations like image and video editing, but shouldn't matter much when you're wordprocessing or Web surfing.

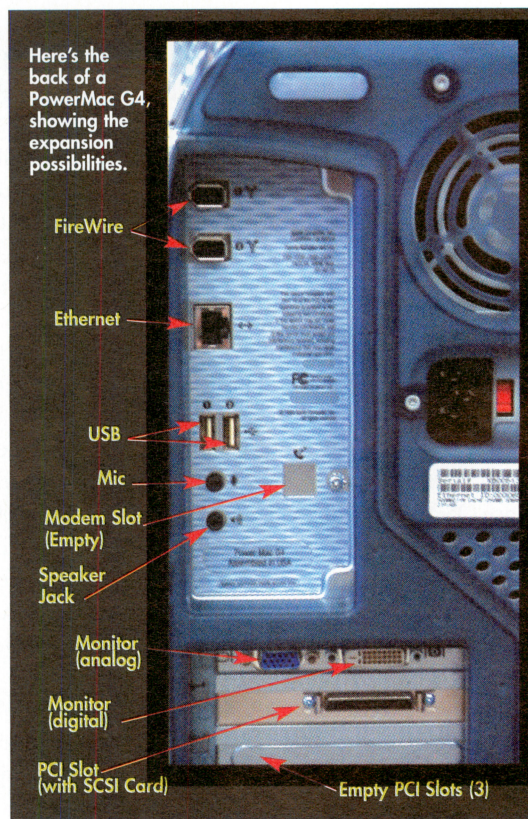
CD/DVD — Apple's 24X speed CD-ROM drives can play all types of CDs: CD-audio, VideoCD, CD-ROM, and even recordable CDs written with a CD-R or CD-RW drive. The 4X DVD-ROM drive plays all the above (at 24X CD speeds), plus adds the ability to read DVD-Video (movie discs) and DVD-ROM. Power Mac G4 buyers can also opt for a DVD-RAM drive, which reads everything and records 5.2GB DVDs (although not standard DVD-video discs).

Zip Drive — Iomega's popular Zip drive reads and writes 250MB removable disks. The internal Zips are much faster than external USB Zips, so if you want one on your G4, it's best to get it built-in.

FireWire — FireWire is a port standard that can transfer data 33 times faster than USB, at 400Mbps.

It's great for DV camcorders, hard disks, and high-end scanners. Like USB, FireWire devices are also hot-pluggable.

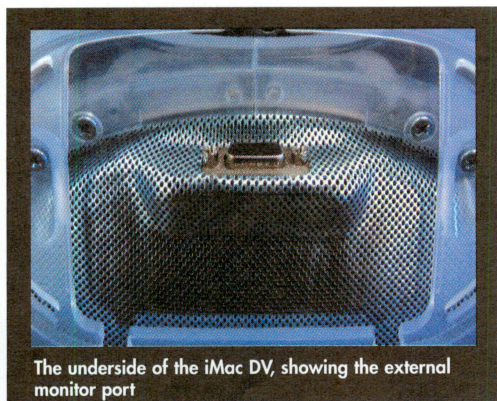
VRAM — The amount of Video RAM determines the maximum resolution and color depth your Mac can support. (Color depth, such as thousands or mil-



lions of colors, refers to the number of different colors viewable onscreen at any given time.) The iMac, iBook and PowerBook all come with enough VRAM to support millions of colors on the maximum resolution their screens will display. The G4 comes with enough VRAM to support a huge 1,920 x 1,200 resolution in 32-bit color — as much as you could ever want.

VGA Output — VGA output ports, found on iMac DVs, G4s and PowerBooks, let you attach a standard monitor. With the G4, this increases your display options, and with the portables, this lets you use two displays simultaneously: You can connect a large monitor or projector to the VGA port for a presentation, while still viewing the LCD screen.

DVI Output — DVI ports — found only on the G4s, are digital connectors that interface with Apple's 15-inch flat-panel display and 22-inch Cinema display. Far superior to the analog connections found on most third-party flat-panel monitors (where video must be converted from digital to analog and then to digital again), DVI ports guarantee crisp and perfect display reproduction. **MHJ**



lot faster since then (in Megahertz). The G4 landed last fall with the new Power Mac towers, and features a "Velocity Engine" (basically a set of instructions that dramatically speed up vector and multimedia operations). At any given Megahertz, the G4 is a just little faster than the G3 in non-Velocity Engine

"WOW Thing you make my Mac sing."

— CNN.com

"...a must for anyone who spends time listening to music on a Mac, especially those who enjoy grooving to MP3."

— MacWorld
March 2000

"...the first must have product for anyone who listens to music on their Mac."

— MacNN

"When sound is piped through the WOW Thing it gets "automagically" filtered, creating a rich sound..."

— MP3.com, Nov. 1999



"WOW Thing makes a huge difference... games became more immediate and dramatic with the sound boost."



— MacHome
Dec. 1999

"Give your Mac a rich new sound."

— USA Today

"Here's the good news: it really does do it."

— MacGamer

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- ▶ Reduce the "tinny" sound of computer speakers
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- ▶ Enhances bass performance and sound image size
- ▶ Restores dynamics of compressed audio over speakers or headphones

Suggested Uses and Compatibility

- ▶ Connect between Mac, video game console, PC or MP3 player and external speakers or headphones for improved sound performance
- ▶ Compatible with any operating system or game console
- ▶ Requires connection to speaker or headphone out jack and AC power outlet

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By David Weiss

OS X

A Look Ahead

We've told you a lot about the promise of OS X — its features and benefits. Here, we'll answer some basic questions about this next-generation operating system.

What are the main benefits?

Protected Memory — Currently, when one application crashes, it often brings the entire Mac to its knees, forcing you to restart. With OS X, when one application crashes, you'll just have to re-launch that application; you won't have to restart, because the operating system will be unaffected.

Multi-Tasking — Processors can only do one thing at a time. But if the operating system can organize its tasks with greater efficiency, it can appear as though the computer is doing two things at the same time, or "multi-tasking." OS X employs a process called "preemptive multi-tasking," which uses a system of priorities to provide faster speeds. The benefit? Less time tapping your fingers on the desk, waiting for something to happen.

Advanced Memory Management — Currently, we've got to "feed" memory to each individual application by clicking once on the app, choosing Get Info, and upping the memory allotment. What a pain! OS X's Memory Manager will take care of all of that for us. It will know when an application needs more memory and it will dole it out as needed, so you can think about much more important things, such as using your Mac.

What are the system requirements?

To run OS X, you'll need at least 64MB of RAM and a G3 processor (or any processor that's been released since the G3, such as the G4). OS X will not run on pre-G3 Macs with G3 upgrade cards.

Will there still be the Desktop as we know it?

Yes. Apple made a lot of changes in the last Developer Preview of OS X, to make it friendlier, easier to use, and more familiar to Mac users (see this month's NewsWire). Apple's Chris Bourdon, product manager for OS X, says Apple retained the Desktop so that it behaves in virtually the same way.

Are there going to be control panels?

No, there aren't going to be control panels, plural. Instead, there will be one central control panel. Bourdon says this will be much easier. "Now, each control panel is a separate interface. In the future, there'll be one place you can go to change all of your system settings."

Is there going to be an Extensions folder?

No. Says Bourdon: "We wanted to get away from creating 'patches' to the system. This concept does not exist in OS X, so there'll be no need to worry about which extensions are included."

So how will we deal with extension conflicts, or conflicts with different drivers?

"My feeling," says Bourdon, "is that we won't have to worry about it. We wanted to eliminate the whole concept of conflicts. Also, drivers shouldn't conflict at all."



Will we still select printers — or get onto a network — by using the Chooser?

At this point, we're not sure. Apple may use the Chooser, or it may use a completely different metaphor altogether. Bourdon, however, assured me that Apple understands people's needs to access printers, get onto a local network, and get on the Internet. "There's going to be some great networking in the future," says Bourdon. "OS X gives us a very robust networking architecture."

Is it going to be hard to get used to at first?

Bourdon thinks it's going to be very easy: "People are going to find things very habitual, very intuitive, very natural. They're going to be amazed at its simplicity and elegance." **MHJ**

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PowerBook G3 500, The Outer Limits!

Audio and Video Professionals' Mac Confessions

Here at MacHome we have many opportunities to sample some of the hottest Mac products on the market today. One of the ways I gauge interest in a product is to watch my co-workers — if they all gather around and start ogling at it with eyes wide open and mouths agape, I figure it's a hit.

Well, every time the PowerBook G3/500 makes an appearance, I assure you, people are checking it out. The G3/500's sleek shape and bright screen certainly contribute to the awe factor. What's more, though, is the power that's hidden below the copper-colored keys.

What makes the G3 PowerBook so powerful is not just its amazingly fast 500MHz chip, but its expandability.

This PowerBook has virtually the same expandability you find on your G4 desktop Macs. You can connect FireWire, USB, and a 21" monitor to this baby. Furthermore, high-end video production is easily integrated with the 24-bit video output. This unit is often referred to as the Pismo, its code name while under development at Apple.

The one limiting factor associated with the G3/500 is that unlike your G4s, there are no PCI slots. Typically, there are three of these slots on the back of desktop Macs, allowing users to install PCI expansion cards for Ultra SCSI, video, multiple graphics accelerators, and Ethernet connections. This prevented the G3/500 from appealing to high-end audio and video professionals who crave the portability and power of the G3/500 but require even greater expandability in order to connect to the highly specialized hardware particular to their industry.

Incredible Expandability

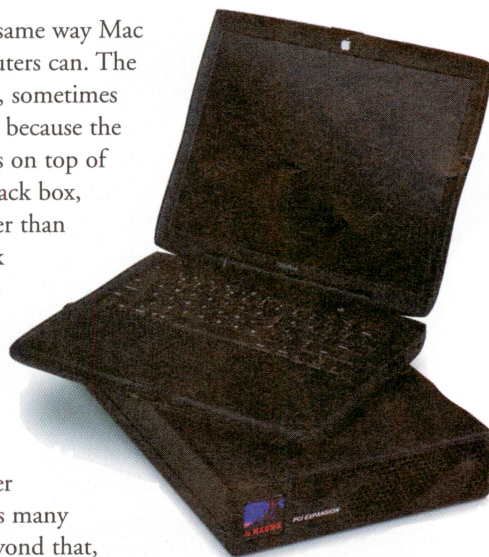
But now, there are no more limits! A small company based in San Diego, called MAGMA, has developed a PCI Expansion System that simply plugs into the G3/500's CardBus slot. This means that the Pismo can now support

PCI cards the same way Mac desktop computers can. The MAGMA unit, sometimes called a chassis because the PowerBook sits on top of it, is a small black box, not much larger than the PowerBook itself. The base model has two expansion slots, and costs \$695. You can also order larger systems with as many as 13 slots. Beyond that, MAGMA expansion systems come in a wide variety of configurations — some even provide additional hard drives.

With the MAGMA system, musicians and video professionals alike are clamoring for it.

Meet the Pros

MacHome is pleased to introduce three individuals who have used the G3/500 with the MAGMA 2 slot Expansion System for both their personal and professional use. These systems have made a tremendous impact on their careers, and it's quite remarkable what they can now do with their portable Macs.



The Magic Producer

We'd first like to introduce you to a fellow who goes by the name of Magic Dave. He's been recording music professionally since the 1970s and has been involved with digital video for about six years. He works for MOTU (Mark of the Unicorn) in Cambridge, Mass.

MOTU has been in business for about 20 years and develops audio software and hardware for music-making on Mac and Windows computers. Mind you, these are not run-of-the-mill products. These are very advanced, high-end software and hardware packages that are used by some of the biggest names in the recording industry. When Magic Dave is not working away at MOTU, he produces music and video for local bands and artists.

Magic Dave's career has literally been transformed by products like the G3/500 and the expansion chassis. "The MAGMA expansion chassis allowed me to connect pro-quality audio hardware to the PowerBook. My little rig can now do what used to require a roomful of equipment costing tens of thousands of dollars. That is not an exaggeration!"

Magic Dave has found that his PowerBook is indispensable, even when he's away from work. "I've been living inside PowerBooks for years now. I use my PowerBook for databases, email, Web browsing, graphics work, video editing, games, and on and on..."

We often think that audio and video professionals use highly specialized software that most people are unfamiliar with. Although this is partially true, Magic Dave does depend on software that you or I might use regularly. "I have a wide range of graphics, video, and music software. My primary tools are Final Cut Pro [Apple], Photoshop [Adobe], Canvas [Deneba], Studio Artist [Synthetik Software], and of course, Digital Performer [MOTU]."

"My uses require an XLR8 video/USB capture cable and an Aurora Fuse PCI card for video capture." And to help process audio, Magic Dave uses a MOTU 2408 system.

At MacHome we are curious to know

why individuals find the Mac such an appealing computer to own. According to Magic Dave, in the audio business, it's more of a necessity than a choice. "There was a time that I didn't know there was a difference between Mac and Windows," he said. "I just thought a computer was a computer. When I started at MOTU, the emphasis was on Macintosh because that's been the choice for musicians for a long time. I've now had a bit more experience with Windows and I would consider my choice to stay with Mac to be an educated choice." We wondered if he'd ever used anything else — "I used to work on an abacus, but it was much slower..." Pretty amazing stuff, Magic Dave!

Rock 'n' Roll Stars

Tom Mitchell wears many hats. He's a musician and audio engineer, musical arranger, and producer working in a well-known rock band.

Mitchell's been in the control room since 1985 or so. "I had been gazing longingly from the other side of the glass for about five years before that. At one point I hung up playing for engineering, but then the players at the sessions were having all the fun. So now I do both, often simultaneously; an awareness of one has unquestionably been helpful to my ability with the other."

He's one of the fellows that uses both the products that Magic Dave and MOTU develop, along with MAGMA's chassis system. Because he is frequently touring and on the road, the G3/500 is a perfect choice that he could probably not live without, since he uses it for "everything but making dinner and breathing." "It's the central hub of my music workstation," he says, "not to mention my Internet gateway, repository of my thoughts, and so on."

For Mitchell, the Mac platform was also the obvious choice. "I'm a pragmatist, not a fanatic. I prefer the user interface of the Mac OS to Windows, and

apparently so do the creators of the music applications that I use the most. So it's what I use. For me it is so much simpler to get the hardware running — and keep it running — on a Mac than on a Windows machine."

As for many Mac users, it is more than just the computer that attracts us, says Mitchell. "There is the sense of a broader community of users that we are akin to. We understand each other and have a kind of bond that isn't found among PC users." Tom agrees. "Another factor for me," he says, "is the way that the Mac market, being smaller, seems to attract people who are there more for the love of what they're doing than for that almighty mass-market dollar, and I feel more comfortable dealing with people like that. I hate to generalize that way about people, and who can say exactly how passionate people should be

Did You Know?

The latest **PowerBook** allows you to add a second monitor (even as large as 21") and have it work with the existing monitor to form one big, extended desktop. This is an improvement over past PowerBooks, which could only mirror the desktop on a second monitor.

about their tools (will they have any passion left for their work?), but I still think that's worth mentioning."

And it is precisely the tools of the trade, and the passion of both the manufacturers and users alike, that keep professionals like Mitchell at the top of his game. Of the MAGMA 2 slot, Mitchell says "I've been waiting a long time for this one to come out. It's just right — big enough to not leave me short, but also not too big and heavy to lug around. The price is right for me, too."

Tom described the performance of his portable system. "Although I had considered splitting the load, with some of the new USB audio interfaces for a PowerBook-based road system and a MOTU interface for home use with my desktop Mac, but so far the Pismo

with the MAGMA system seems every bit as powerful as the desktop system. I think it makes more sense to just work with the MAGMA rig. No more transferring files, swapping hard drives, or learning two hardware systems' quirks. What my projects sound like on the road should be just about the way they'll sound anywhere. Not needing more than a couple of PCI cards makes this feat possible."

For those of you that do a lot of work with audio products, either professionally or as a hobby, Mitchell explains which software and peripherals he uses with his G3/500: "Since Digital Performer 2.7 came out, I've declared a moratorium on looking at other sequencer/audio apps until I know that beast inside and out and can honestly say to myself that it would be worth the time spent learning another program to get some feature that Digital Performer doesn't have and that I just can't live without."

And just what kind of peripherals does a top-notch rock and roller, audio engineer use with his G3 PowerBook? Mitchell's got an Adaptec 2930 card, which runs an IBM hard drive in the MAGMA (Yes, you can also add extra storage to your MAGMA system) He also uses an external CD burner when he's home. A MOTU 2408 system handles his audio input and output. "I can't wait to get home and hook up an external monitor, but I'm scared of getting spoiled." Perhaps it's a bit too late for that, Tom...

On Location

Another remarkable character who works in the movie industry is Jeb Johnenning. Johnenning and his partner Richard Goodman founded Ocean Video in 1994. As Johnenning puts it,

"We set out to revolutionize the video-assist market in the film industry. Our equipment has been used in dozens of films, such as *The Matrix* and *Mission Impossible 2*. The entire business is run from my home in Beverly Hills, California, on a Pismo!"

Ocean Video's Brainstorm products, which record video digitally, "are used to replace traditional tape-based video-assist equipment. The system records virtually every scene during the production filming of the movie. At the request of the director, any of these scenes are instantly available for his review."

Johenning's PowerBook G3/500 with 256 MB RAM, DVD, 12GB hard disk, and a MAGMA 2-slot chassis with dual 9GB Barracuda drives, ATTO Ultra 2

SCSI card, and a Media 100 XR system allows him to pack up and travel the world with tremendous ease and reliability. "We are now developing the first Brainstorm product based around the Pismo to make our system the smallest, most portable, and the most full-featured. It is scheduled to go into battle this August, in the new John Woo film *Windtalker*, which is being shot entirely on location in the rugged jungles of Hawaii. The portable Brainstorm system will give the director as-yet-unavailable video playback flexibility on location."

We wanted to know why Johnenning purchased a Pismo. "What do you mean? Are there other kinds of computers? Seriously, we have been using Macs since our company's inception and we find the consistency and reliability unmatched in the industry."

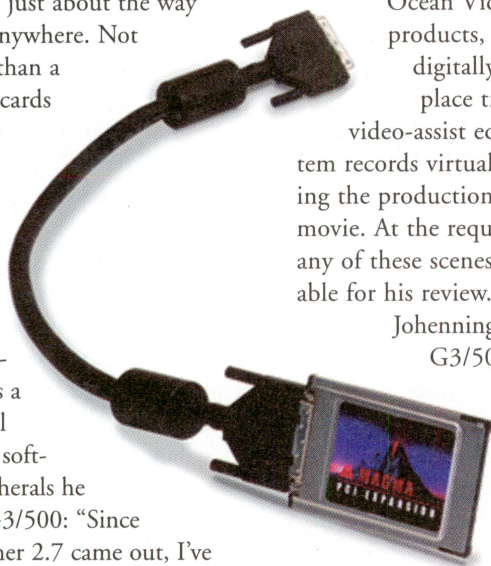
If you are interested in expanding your video-production capabilities, Johnenning has some sage advice. "For the more affluent user who might be interested in professional video, sound, or graphics, the Pismo and MAGMA

combination really hits the mark. While there are powerful software-only solutions like Final Cut Pro, many of the hardware-based solutions such as Media 100 XR, or Pro Tools 24 can only be realized using an expansion chassis.

The Right Stuff

It is truly amazing to see what these individuals have done using their PowerBook G3/500s. This machine has become an indispensable part of their professional and personal lives. Furthermore, their businesses have become tremendously agile and mobile, and they haven't had to spend enormous sums of money.

The availability of powerful software and hardware will clearly make the G3/500 a must-have from here on out in the audio and video arenas. It has tremendous expansion capabilities and interacts capably and reliably with slick expansion slot products. What more could you possibly want? **MHJ**



Additional Resources

Adobe Systems, Inc.
800-833-6687
www.adobe.com

Apple Computer
800-692-7753
www.apple.com

Deneba Software
305-596-5644
www.deneba.com

MAGMA
858-530-2511
www.magma.com

MOTU
617-576-2760
www.motu.com

Synthetic Software
415-864-6582
www.synthetic.com



Creation is the easy part...

Keeping them under control
is another story.

The SIMS™



The game that hits close to home.



Westlake
INTERACTIVE

MAXIS
Maxis™ is a brand
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Mac Health Care

Virex Vs. Norton AntiVirus

Recently, computers around the world were infected by the ironically named "I LOVE YOU" virus, which quickly infected millions of computers and was passed on to others unknowingly. Innocent computer users made the unfortunate mistake of opening a simple email and destroying large amounts of data.

Lloyds of London estimated the damage to be \$15 billion.

Fortunately, Macs are often unaffected by these viruses for a couple of reasons. First of all, most virus writers seek a larger target audience, and Macs represent about 10% of computer users. Secondly, it is easier to create viruses that infect PCs because DOS-based programs are written to allow unscrupulous individuals to essentially get under the hood of any PC. This is more difficult with the Mac due to the lack of "backdoors" or "security holes."

By Ross Tibbits

Macs are still subject to viruses. This is especially true in computer lab settings and when files are regularly shared.

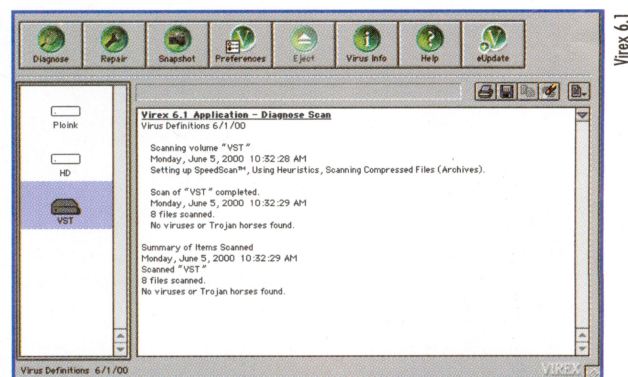
Macro viruses effect Microsoft Word and Excel files most commonly, inserting unwanted words, characters, or phrases into your document. Fortunately, these are far less harmful than many PC-based viruses.

To save your computer's data and valuable information it is always a good idea to have an updated virus protection program running on your Mac. New versions of Dr. Solomon's Virex 6.1 and Norton AntiVirus 6.0 have recently been released and we'd like to tell you about them.

Norton AntiVirus 6.0

Peter Norton takes an already formidable virus-protection program and improves on it. The first thing you'll want to do after installing the program is scan your hard drive and any other data on discs or backup hard drives that you have so all of your data is virus-free.

The Norton AntiVirus program window allows you to view your data by file or by volume. Once you select the



item(s) to be scanned, simply click on the Scan/Repair button and Norton goes to work. If a virus is found, Norton repairs it automatically — unless you have changed the default settings. When the scan is complete, a list of repaired files will appear in the window.

The easy-to-understand program window also has a Preferences button. Within Preferences you can decide how or when to scan floppy disks, and you can set up a Safe Zone folder where Norton will automatically scan files and downloads you put into it. By selecting Scan within Preferences you can select specific applications and files to be scanned when you open them.

Within Preferences you may choose the Prevention button. Within this window there are three settings under Prevention and Monitor Virus-Like Activities: None, Standard, and Custom. Standard means that Norton will monitor for virus-like activities, and Custom allows you to choose from within a set in Preferences. You can choose

either to seek out or not seek out virus-like activities on your system. There are a total of 14 activities you can monitor for.

Other preferences include creating a report of your scans in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Simple Text, or a program of your choice. This streamlines your efforts and makes it easier to incorporate information into current files.

As with any new program you buy, you should always look to the Internet to download any updates for the program. Norton AntiVirus makes this simple. All you have to do is click on Live Update in the main window and Norton downloads and installs the necessary software — very cool.

Live Update acts as a separate program that will update all the Norton programs on your computer. Customize your update session to select specifically what you want updated, or update all Norton programs at once. There is also a Schedule Future Updates calendar that lets you program your updates for the most convenient date and time.

A nice bonus you get with this program is a free one-year subscription to Norton's virus-definition updates through Norton's AntiVirus Protection Plan, giving you the latest protection for free.

Dr. Solomon's Virex 6.1

Virex immediately distinguished itself from the Norton program. While installing Virex I was asked if I would like to scan my hard drive for viruses before I installed the program. This is a very sensible procedure. Once installed, Virex efficiently scans your hard drive for older versions of its software, cleaning out any debris.

Furthermore, during the installation process, you can choose to include a Virex Control Strip module that gives you immediate access to the program through your control strip (if activated). This is often more convenient than opening your hard drive, finding the application folder, and so on, because you may not use your anti-virus software often enough to have it remain in your Apple Menu's Recent Applications list.

There is also a DropScan feature that

will place a DropScan alias on your desktop. As implied, it allows you to take individual files or folders and literally drop them onto the alias for scanning.

If you have recently scanned your hard drive, this is a very fast and simple way of keeping your newest documents and programs clean, and represents a different approach to scanning individual files.

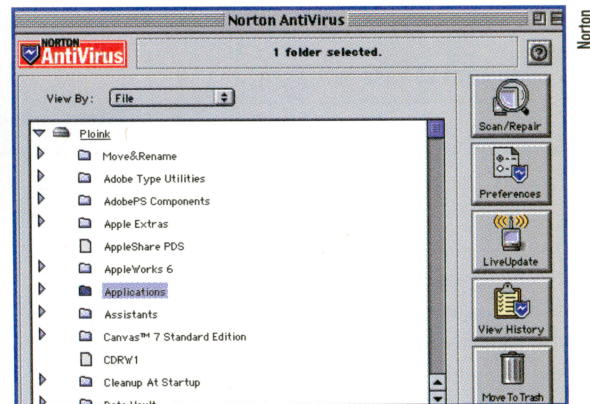
By contrast, the Norton solution of creating a Safe Zone (a separate folder) requires that you eventually take files out of a folder and redistribute them to their appropriate folders, such as one created for your home finances, etc.

Virex was developed to be installed over a network as well. Network administrators can load Virex onto their server so individuals can install Virex from their desktop without physically loading the installation CD. This ensures that the program is not lost or damaged and the network administrator always knows the location of the original program material.

There is little to distinguish the Virex program window from Norton's window. Although the layout is slightly different, the buttons serve very similar purposes. Unlike Norton, there is a Repair button on the main page. You can choose to have Virex fix any viruses on the fly or decide to have Virex locate infected files and find and repair them individually by clicking on the Repair button.

If you are having trouble with a particular function button in Virex, you can use the Help button to solve your problem. This is a neat feature; all you have to do is press the Command and Option keys on your keyboard and then click on the button or item of your choice. A Help window will then open with an explanation for you.

There are few of us who can list many viruses that attack the Mac with much ease. Virex has a button called Virus Info that will list and describe all viruses and



Trojan horses known to attack the Mac. You can also go to a Virex Website for even more detailed information.

Updating your Mac with the latest virus-fighting information is as easy as clicking the eUpdate button on the main program window. Once active, this tool automatically downloads, un-stuffs, and installs any Virex updates onto your computer — effortlessly.

The Final Decision You will be hard-pressed to go wrong with either one of these anti-virus programs. They both make fighting viruses a breeze and offer plenty of control. If you want scans and repairs done automatically, they'll do it for you. If

you want to see what needs fixing prior to fixing it, both can do that as well. The two features that distinguished the Virex program were the DropScan and Control Strip interfaces. They are right there on your desktop and they make it a breeze to access the program. **MJH**

rating ★★★★★

Norton AntiVirus 6.0
\$39, Symantec
800-441-7234
www.symantec.com

Great virus monitoring, useful report formats, nice price

Not networkable

rating ★★★★★

Virex 6.0
\$44, Network Associates
408-988-3832
www.nai.com

Excellent virus protection, useful DropScan and Control Strip features, networkable

None

ArtMatic

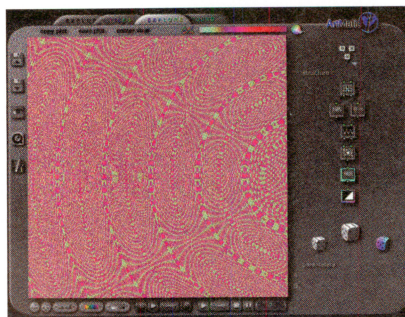
ArtMatic is difficult to categorize. Dubbed an “art synthesizer,” this wacky tool allows you to easily create untold numbers of swirling, colorful designs, complete with techno-inspired, atmospheric sound effects. Now why would you want to do that? Well, apart from it just being kinda fun, you can use ArtMatic to create custom backgrounds for your Web pages, greeting cards, and posters, and you can create groovy animated segments for videos or Web pages. You can also use it to create mood images for dance parties, if it floats your boat.

The main window starts you off with an image, and from here you can zoom in or out, or drag the image left, right, up, or down. What’s interesting — but more importantly, what’s powerful — about this program is that when you do zoom in or out, ArtMatic re-draws the image at high resolution. So you’ll get

the benefit of a huge variety of views, none of which show up with big blocky pixels. You can also animate your image, saving it as a QuickTime movie.

You can click on one of three Dice tools, which randomize the parameters and generate a completely different image. It offers menu options as well, but they’ve got such baffling titles that they end up being yet more ways to randomize parameters in your image. It’s not really possible to create an image that you already have in mind, but the images it does create are often fascinating and varied, ranging from subtle and atmospheric to ornate and richly detailed.

In the Sound section, you can “hear” your images — the program creates sound based on what’s in the main window —



highly enjoyable way to happen upon a veritable cornucopia of happy visual accidents, and it can also create some pleasant, random sounds. It’s a good tool to have in a graphic designer’s toolbox.

— David Weiss

and most of the time, the sounds are both complex and oddly fitting.

The Final Decision

Although you can’t really use ArtMatic to create a particular effect to suit a particular purpose, it’s a

rating

\$90 (\$79 Download),
U&I Software
650-367-6161
www.uisoftware.com
PowerPC Required

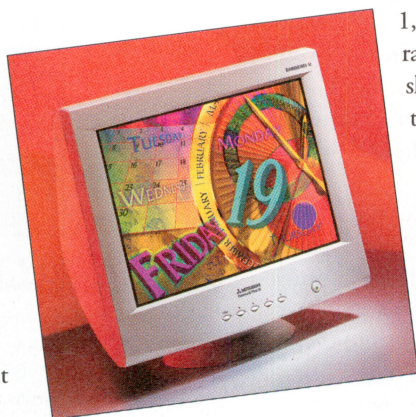
 Provides myriad images, can create backgrounds and animated QuickTime movies, creates atmospheric soundtracks on the fly

 Difficult to use for specific purposes, uses arcane nomenclature

Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 91

With the burgeoning fields of desktop publishing, desktop digital video, and Web design, those who once thought that a screen larger than 15 inches was exorbitant are swiftly changing their minds. While many still consider 21-inch monitors too unwieldy, the next size down, at 19 inches, may just hit the spot. For that, you won’t do better than the Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 91.

While the casing is nothing fancy, the screen is simply a pleasure to behold, rendering both text and images with bell-like clarity. Technically, though the Diamond



Plus 91 is a CRT (cathode ray tube) as opposed to a flat panel, the screen appears flat to the eye because of Mitsubishi’s Diamondtron NF flat-faced technology. In addition, its proprietary glass system, .25 mm to .27mm aperture grille pitch, maximum resolution of 1,600 x 1,200, and refresh rate of 75Hz give you a sharp, flicker-free image that’s easy on the eyes.

This comes at a very reasonable price of \$479. Indeed, while Mitsubishi’s earlier “flat faced” offerings targeted high-end professionals, this new monitor is priced with the small office and home-based business in mind.

Be aware that any non-Apple monitor may need a Mac-to-VGA adapter, which may or may not have come in the box with your Mac. Mitsubishi includes a Mac adapter, but the DIP switch settings

are less than inherently obvious, particularly if you want to use the multisync function to switch monitor resolutions. Mitsubishi says that the default DIP switch setting is the correct multisync setting for the Diamond Plus 19-inch monitor. However, the documentation does not cover this specifically, so it was a bit confusing. For the record, the 21-inch multimode setting is the correct one for this display.

The Final decision

Despite that glitch, I highly recommend the Mitsubishi Diamond Plus 91. Not only is it a pleasure to look at and to use, but it is easy and intuitive for any user.

— Jackie Dove

rating

\$479, Mitsubishi
800-843-2515
www.mitsubishi-display.com

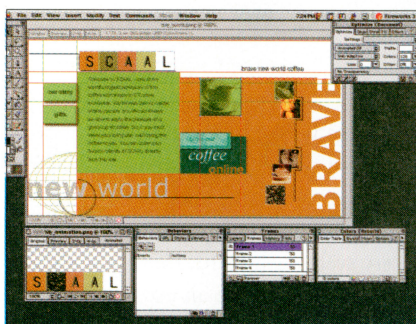
 Sharp, clear display, beautiful color saturation, easy on the eyes, easy adjustment

 DIP switch adapter setting for multisync mode was confusing

Fireworks 3

We last reviewed Fireworks in July 1999, giving it a five-apple rating. The reason? Fireworks integrated the best of image editing, animation and Web design into a single package that left programs like ImageReady and Image-Style in the dust. Macromedia has raised the bar again, pushing Fireworks to new heights and making it the only Web image editor you'll ever need.

What makes Fireworks stand out in the Web/image-editing arena is that it's a complete package. Currently, most programs on the market require you to own,



use, and integrate more than one program in order to create Web graphics: one for creating graphics, one for combining and optimizing those graphics, and perhaps another for creating animations. Since version 2, Fireworks has combined all of these options into a single program.

Fireworks 3 has been streamlined to help you work better. Take button creation for example. Use the rectangle tool to create a simple button. Grab the text tool to add text to that button, and then Option-drag to create duplicates of what you've just created. Change the text on each button and then select one button to give it a bevel and a drop-shadow. Everything is immediately updated, right on the screen. You can then use the History panel to apply these same effects to all of your other buttons, with just one click.

The Fireworks application is now completely Java-scriptable and allows you to preview button rollovers and animations from right within the program. Individual images within larger groups of images can be optimized separately, and you can also import Freehand, Photoshop, and Flash files, maintain their layers, and edit each layer individually within Fireworks.

The Final Decision Fireworks is a Web image editing knockout.

Powerful tools and useful features combine to make Fireworks the only program you're likely to need when creating images for the Web.

— Jeff Battersby

rating ★★★★★

\$199, Upgrade \$99,
Macromedia
800 326-2128.
www.macromedia.com

👍 Complete Web image-editing program, simple button creation, easy to create intricate rollovers, excellent optimization

👎 None

YankPro 3.1

Every year at springtime people are hurriedly sending old clothes to Goodwill, getting rid of possessions they never use, and scrubbing down the house from top to bottom. Did you ever think about your computer in this context? Your hard drive is not unlike your home: it needs to have old files thrown out, or updated; duplicated items should be removed; and damaged files either fixed or thrown away. YankPro is just the tool you need to do this.

This easy-to-use program provides you



with 12 tools that will scour your hard drive for specific information. These tools are represented by buttons on the main program window, and should be self-explanatory to the majority of Mac users. It is wise to use the well-written manual to ensure you aren't cleaning out important data mistakenly.

The Uninstall tool allows you to locate and remove a program and its associated files from your hard drive. These are sometimes tricky to find.

A knowledgeable user may have no need for the help files that every program comes with. Use the Help Files button to find all of these and select the ones to remove.

Remember throwing away some program months ago? What happened to the files associated with it? They're orphans now. Click the Orphaned Text Files button and rid yourself of them; they are of no use anymore.

This program is excellent at locating empty files and folders, duplicate applications, and cache files that are outdated or unnecessary. If you want to compress files, use the Slim Fat Applications tool. It can also locate, review and/or delete all orphaned aliases, damaged files, duplicate files, and compressed files as well.

The Final Word This is a program that everyone should have to keep their computer free of unknown clutter. The price is right and it is easy to use. Just remember to understand what you are removing!

— Ross Tibbitts

rating ★★★★★

\$29, ASD Software, Inc.
www.asdsoft.com

👍 Very useful, great price, easy to use

👎 None

Telex USB Digital Microphones

Telex, the well-known manufacturer of headsets and microphones, has released two USB microphone products for iMacs and iBooks. These are the first of their kind on the market to date, so we thought you'd be interested in them.

These microphones were developed to interact specifically with the Sound control panel in OS 9.0.4 and take advantage of its new USB compatibility. They are particularly useful if you frequently use voice applications, and can be used without the added installation and expense of a separate sound card.

The Headworn Microphone, despite what it may look like (it goes over the ear), is just a microphone. This device allows you to record with excellent sound quality while leaving you unencumbered by having to hold a microphone. This would be particularly use-

ful in a language lab or with voice-recognition software.

The Telex Super-Directional microphone offers excellent recording quality for use with all voice applications, such as voice-recognition software and, Internet phone, as well as language labs, dictation, and voice command and control applications. It is better suited to video conferencing or with use amongst a group. It captured sound very well — almost too well. Attaching the stick-shaped device to my iBook and pointing it across the room, I captured, ever so clearly, a co-worker talking from 25 feet away. The recording seemed crisper than in real life. The problem can be that you will also hear any other noise, from the street, for instance. This can, at times, interfere with what you are trying to record.



The Final Decision

For those of you looking for excellent speech-recognition and voice-recording quality, these are very good choices. Telex does an excellent job of capturing voice with little interfer-

ence. If you were actually considering a digital sound card, this might be an excellent alternative. Unfortunately, they are not designed for use with G3/G4s, and don't come in candy colors.

— Ross Tibbits

rating



\$60 (Headworn), \$70 (M-560 Super-Directional); Telex Communications, Inc. 800-328-3771 www.computeraudio.telex.com USB Required

Both provide excellent digital sound without a sound card

Both incompatible with G3/G4, not available in colors

CD-ROM ToolKit

CD-ROM software rarely comes to mind; you usually just pop the disk into the drive and proceed to listen to music, play a game, or install software. If you're using the built-in CD-ROM drive in your Mac, then you're probably using Apple's CD-ROM software.

However, if you've replaced that drive or added another one to your system, know that third-party CD-ROM software is necessary; that's when FWB's CD-ROM ToolKit comes in handy.

CD-ROM ToolKit has long been considered the "king" of CD-ROM software

packages. It uses several caching and read-ahead techniques for improving data transfer, but the relative improvement generated by these techniques diminish with higher-speed CD-ROM drives, which offer better data transfer. The Remote Audio Controller program

has much of the same functionality as the AppleCD Audio Player program. It would be nice, however, to see built-in support for Internet music databases such as the CDDb. The

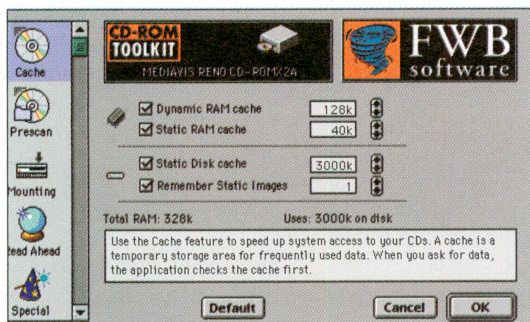
Equalizer tool allows you to adjust the audio quality as you would on any good stereo system.

This latest version also promises support for MP3, the music file format that's sweeping across the Internet. This MP3 interface is delivered through

included "lite" versions of Audion (playback) and N2MP3 (encoding). Unfortunately, these MP3 programs aren't integrated into the core CD-ROM Toolkit software. For example, it would be nice to play MP3 files from within the CD-ROM Remote program, or use that program to select audio tracks for MP3 conversion.

The Final Decision The MP3 programs are convenient, but the main attraction of CD-ROM Toolkit remains the support for third-party CD-ROM drives, and anyone looking to replace or add a CD-ROM drive should pick up a copy of CD-ROM Toolkit.

— Frank Araullo



rating



\$80, FWB Software 800-656-5443 www.fwb.com PowerPC Required

Powerful array of options for enhancing CD-ROM performance, support for numerous CD-ROM drives

MP3 support is peripheral

RF-25 Wireless SurfBoard

Quick, what device do you already have that will plug into your TV or stereo system, play CDs and DVDs, act as a music jukebox, and even let you edit and play back movies? Yes, it's your Mac. If you'd like to join the multimedia party, or just surf the Web on your big-screen TV from the comfort of your couch, one of the first steps should be to buy a wireless controller.



The most capable remote input device is Wireless Computing's SurfBoard, hands-down. This remote USB keyboard

uses radio-frequency technology rather than infrared, which means you don't have to point it directly at the receiver all the time, it much more reliable. What's more, it integrates a standard trackpad and two mouse buttons, similar to a portable computer.

The SurfBoard works for weeks of frequent use with four AA batteries, and the base receiver plugs right in with no software drivers necessary. We had to adjust the mouse tracking speed in the Mouse control panel, but that was it.

A handy light on the keyboard shows when it is in operation, and it turns itself off automatically after 20 minutes to conserve the batteries. Touching any key starts it up again.

The SurfBoard was originally designed

for PCs, and uses the standard PC keyboard layout. This won't be a problem for many Mac users who are used to both types, but is annoying nonetheless. It also comes in a very PC-like ugly black casing. Finally, the SurfBoard only comes in a USB version, while the MacAirkey also has an ADB model.

The Final Decision If you've got a USB Mac and want a reliable remote keyboard for either home multimedia or office presentations, the SurfBoard is the best option.

Learning a couple different key placements is a small price to pay for the convenience.

— *Becky Waring*

rating

\$99, Wireless Computing
(512) 858-4400
www.wireless-computing.com

 Reliable RF remote keyboard with integrated trackpad and mouse buttons, plug-and-play

 PC keyboard layout, no ADB version, utilitarian design

Canvas 7 SE

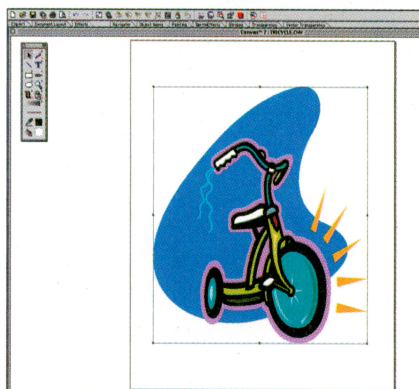
Often when we think of Illustrator and page-layout programs, the first name that comes to mind is Adobe. The fact is, there are other, quite-robust drawing and graphics programs available that incorporate page-layout functions as well. Case in point, Canvas 7 SE.

When you first open Canvas 7 Special Edition, its layout area spreads out in front of you. Around an outlined page is extra white space upon which you can work with examples and drafts before incorporating them into your final work.

At the top of your Canvas page is a Toolbar, and just below that a Docking Bar. The Toolbar is dedicated to functions such as Save, Open, Print, Lock Image, Unlock Image, as well as object orientation tools that allow you to move an object to the front or back. I found the Lock Image tool to be really helpful, all you have to do is click on either the locked or unlocked padlock icon and

you're done. To reverse the command, click on the other one that is now highlighted, or active. You can also customize the toolbar, filling it with the most necessary tools.

You should take special note of the Docking Bar. Unlike Illustrator, where you must open and close the specific windows you want for functions such as Appearance, Navigator, Stroke, etc., Canvas offers a cleaner approach. In the Docking Bar, windows such as Effects, Links, Painting, and Clip Art are minimized Docking Palettes that act as drop-down menus which remain closed and low-profile until you click on them. This saves precious desktop real estate around your work, and lets you easily close windows you are not using without having to go back to the Toolbar to re-open



them through a separate pulldown menu — as in Illustrator.

When it is time to get to work, you can be fantastically creative with Canvas. Finding artistic limitations with this program is

akin to finding a needle in a haystack.

The Final Decision If you are looking for an excellent illustration, painting, drawing, and text-layout program, this is a great choice. The user-interface is particularly good, and you cannot beat the price!

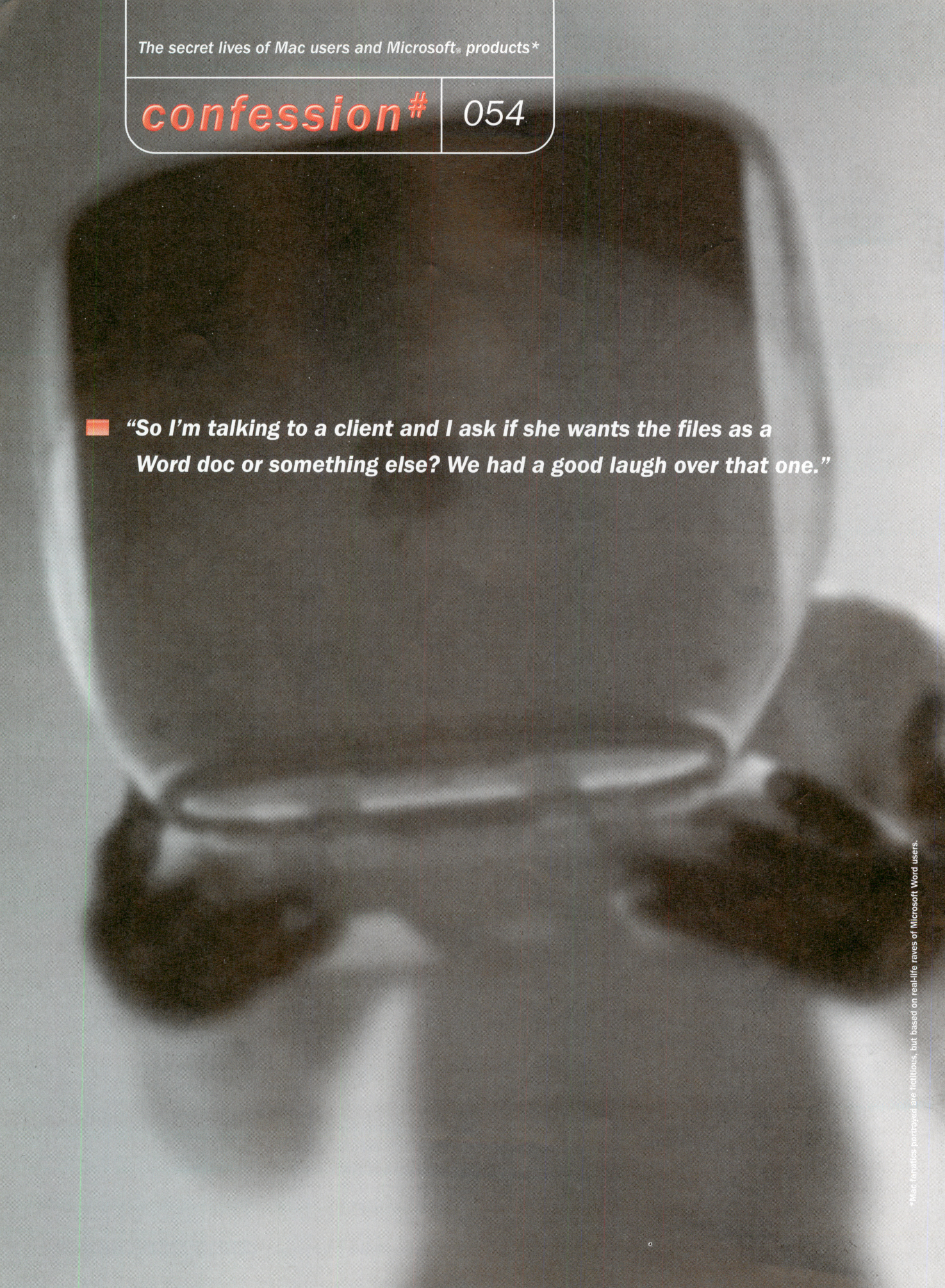
— *Ross Tibbitts*

rating

\$85, Deneba
305 596-5644.
www.deneba.com

 Very nice design and features, the price is right

 none

- 
- *"So I'm talking to a client and I ask if she wants the files as a Word doc or something else? We had a good laugh over that one."*



name: "John"

age: 23

hobbies: Bauhaus design
Poetry slams
Lara Croft

Microsoft
Word
Macintosh Edition

Find out more—visit Mactopia at microsoft.com/mac

Microsoft

AirEZY 2400 Wireless Ethernet Adapter

Won't it be a joyful day when we can do away with wires? ODC Telecom would like to give us a head start with the AirEZY 2400 Wireless Ethernet Adapter.

You need at least two to tango — one for each of the Macs you want to network. You can even attach one to an Ethernet hub so any other Macs that have the AirEZY 2400 installed can get full access to anything on your network — printers, file servers, or Internet access.

The AirEZY 2400 is a small gray box with a short rubber antenna. Four lights on the top tell you of its disposition — whether or not it knows there's another AirEZY out there, whether it's happily connected, whether data is flowing back

and forth, etc. Unfortunately, in order to use the AirEZY, you need to be tethered to an AC outlet — so its wireless freedom can only go so far.

Setup is relatively simple, as it requires no software. Plug it in, wait for the lights to blink contentedly, and away you go.

Unfortunately, diagnostic software is Windows only. The manual, however, is not very helpful when it comes to choosing which cord to use for which type of setup, so I needed to resort to a little trial and error.

The AirEZY 2400 is rated at 2Mb per second, which is slower than a regular



Ethernet network (10Mbps). The AirEZY took an average of three minutes to copy data that our regular

Ethernet network copied in an average of four seconds. But, for an extra \$100, you can purchase the AirEZY 2405 (5Mbps), or for an extra \$200, the AirEZY 2411 (11Mbps).

The Final Decision The AirEZY 2400 is a good, inexpensive way to share files wirelessly.

However, it's best for older Macs; for the newer ones, Apple's AirPort (Reviewed in 2/2000) provides faster speeds and doesn't require AC power.

— David Weiss

rating

\$199 Per Unit, OTC Telecom
800-770-6698
www.ezylink.com

 Easy to set up, easy to use, can be used with any Ethernet-capable Mac, has useful indicator lights

 Requires AC power, slow, overly technical manual, extra software goodies are Windows-only

Lexmark Z52

Founded in 1991, Lexmark has made significant technological advances in print quality. Recently, they unveiled the Z52, a Thermal InkJet printer that represents the entry level of Lexmark's Mac-compatible line.

By design, the Z52 is nicely compact. Paper is drawn from a semi-vertical tray in the back and passes through to a tray on the lower front edge of the printer. The rear tray can be folded down so that it is flush with the printer body, while the front tray is retractable and stows away easily.

The Z52, it turns out, is incompatible with OS 9.0.4. Technical support informed me that it is compatible with OS 9.0.

The Z52 offers a 2,400 x 1,200 print-

ing setting in both color and black-and-white. You can print on regular paper at this resolution, not just glossy photo paper, as with some other printers.

The Z52 is adept at printing images on glossy paper. Both color and black-and-white images came out very well for a printer that costs only \$179. Printing images at the Maximum (2,400 dpi), the High (1,200 dpi), and Normal (600 dpi) settings revealed two disappointing results. Unlike most printers I've seen, as the Z52's resolution

increased the richness of the colors decreased. Secondly, horizontal streaks appeared at the bottom of the color images.

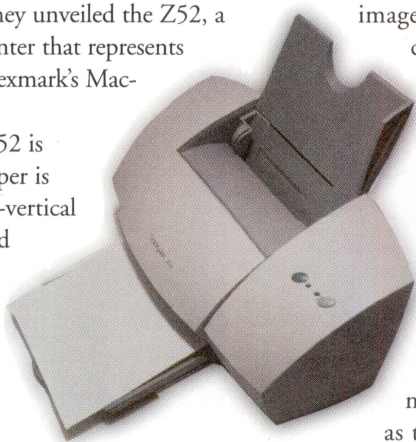
There is an added Quick setting available for plain paper. My images were very washed out and clearly

showed horizontal streaks. You may want to simply stick to text when using this setting.

Text documents will move through the printer quickly and quietly. At the 2,400 dpi setting a full page of text took about two-and-a-half minutes. The Quick setting whips it out in under one second! Text is readable in all settings, with crisp edges and minimal ink bleed.

The Final Decision At this price, the Lexmark shows potential. Both print quality and speed are good, but horizontal streaks are unwelcome. You may want to wait until they have corrected the software and streaking issues before you buy.

— Ross Tibbitts



rating

\$179, Lexmark International, Inc.
888-539-6275
www.lexmark.com

 Very compact, great price, high resolution, very fast

 Not OS 9.0.4 compatible, obvious color streaking

Keeping Up with the Joneses

A Look at Now Up-to-Date & Contact

Places to go, people to meet, things to do — we're all a bunch of busy bees these days, juggling names, numbers, addresses, and dates. It's a lot of info for one human being to handle, but with Now Up-to-Date & Contact, a duo of programs from Power On Software, you can keep tabs on all of this data, and you can also set up group calendars and organize meetings over a local network or even the Internet.

The Time is Now

Now Up-to-Date is a full-featured electronic calendar. You can customize its look by changing the font, line weight, and other such formatting. You can also add clip art from a palette, or add your own. And you can show or hide weekends with a click of a button, which is a nice touch.

Up-to-Date allows you to create separate calendars so you can, for example, toggle between calendars for your personal life and your work. This does require a bit of tweaking — you need to set up categories for the various events you're likely to schedule, and then assign them to "sets." But once you do, you'll find that this feature is quite powerful.

By David Weiss

Up-to-Date gives you an abundant assortment of events. You can create to-dos, which appear in a column on the right for each day they're associated with, and until you mark them as "done," they move over into the next day. You can create things such as banners, which stretch across a series of days, and stickies, which stand out to command special attention.

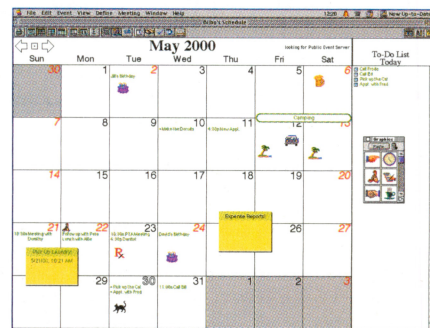
When you create a new event, there is no Cancel or OK button, which are common features for a Mac application. So when you type out a new to-do, and you change your mind, you have to complete the action and then delete it, which is an unnecessary step. And sometimes when I created a to-do and turned the text into a graphic — something you can do to make the event stand out — the event would just disappear. PowerOn representatives told me they were aware of the problem and hope to address it by the time you read this.

Contact Sports

Now Contact is a good, robust contact-management program. It has a host of cool Internet features that can help you find email addresses, phone numbers, zip codes, street maps, and other info. The email search works well, except for with the common names. For my own, I had to search through pages

and pages of other David Weisses, and I still couldn't find the right one. If the program had passed down a bit more information, it would have narrowed the search quite a bit.

The Quick Merge feature easily merges your contacts into a word-processing document for mass-mailings. But if you do anything wrong, watch out! You'll get very strange, unhelpful feedback from the program, which presents you with some odd mail-merge code.



Network Power

Both programs are both fully networkable, so you can share calendars and contacts with anyone else that has the program. You can even post your calendars on the Web. Unfortunately, there is no discount for fewer than 10 users, so for small teams, it can get quite expensive.

The Final Decision

Despite the high price of using these programs in small teams, and its minor problems, Now Up-to-Date & Contact can offer you a big hand in keeping up with the Joneses — not to mention the Smiths, the Greens, and the Bakers. Both programs are powerful, full-featured, and flexible. **MHJ**

rating ★★★★★

Now Up-to-Date & Contact
\$85 per user, \$825 for 10 users; PowerOn Software
800-344-9160
www.poweronsw.com
PowerPC Required

👍 Inexpensive for single users, full-featured, good Web integration, networkable

🗨 Minor interface anomalies, some incomplete error feedback, expensive for small teams

Photos to the People

Websites Generate Instant Virtual Photo Albums

The vast proliferation of digital cameras has accelerated the urge for instant gratification. Not only do you want to see the photos you took of your kid's birthday party, you want everyone else to see them too — not tomorrow, not next week, but right now!

These days, nothing says instant gratification better than photo-sharing Websites, the newest, fastest growing, and easiest way to get your photos on the Web for the rest of the world to see. Photo-sharing sites help you organize, upload, store, and present your digital images, often in a pleasing, eye-catching fashion, by building an instant Web page to display your photos. Though services vary, most also give you choices of backgrounds, colors, and typefaces, letting you name your album and write labels and photo captions — just like the real thing!

By Jackie Dove

Photo-sharing Websites let you post your album free of charge, and are specifically designed to let you post galleries of your favorite digital photos. Most photo-sharing Websites let you post several different albums. Depending on which site (or sites) you use, photo-sharing Websites also facilitate some really fun and easily accessible extras such as editing and placing special effects on your photos, letting you instantly email photos and epostcards to your family and friends, alerting folks that your photo album is online, ordering reprints and photo gifts (Imagine your cat's image plastered atop a fresh-baked cookie. Yum.), and more. Some photo-sharing Websites also incorporate services such as newsletters, tips and tricks, hints on how to buy and use your digital camera, contests, photo-sharing communities, and a variety of other features.

Lest you think that photo-sharing Websites are just another way to amuse yourself during your spare time (and we all know that the Web provides some of the most constructive ways to waste time!), they are not for recreation only. If you're a freelance photographer, book author, or creative professional who needs to share images,



photo-sharing Websites are also a convenient way to show a gallery of images to clients or co-workers.

How They Work

Photo-sharing Websites are just like other Websites: Type a URL into your browser's address window and a Website appears on your screen. If this is your first visit, you typically can view the public online galleries of current members of that Website, which generally are arranged in subject categories, or you can just go ahead and register with the site to create a photo album for yourself. You need only type in a minimal amount of information, such as your name, email address, and



password, though some sites will request more marketing or demographic information.

After signing in, you are ready to upload any pictures you may have on your hard drive. Some photo-sharing Websites have special applications that let you upload multiple images or an entire album at one time. However, you can also use the browser-based upload utility built into the site, which often lets you upload a number of images at one time.

Unfortunately, some of these Websites restrict many of the fun extras — multimedia presentations, slide shows, screen savers and the like — for that other platform. While it is annoying that some non-essential fun stuff tends to cater to the Windows crowd, Mac users still can take advantage of the most important features offered by photo-sharing Websites, especially uploading and viewing images.

While most of the sites give you server space for free, you will be charged for premium services such as photo printing, enlargements, and personalized gifts such as t-shirts, snow globes, paper cubes, cookies, chocolates, and whatnot.

In addition, some photo-sharing Websites offer photo-finishing services. So depending on what you want, you can have your film developed, printed, and put online by a photo-sharing Website. Some will also generate the HTML code you'll need to link your online photo album to your home page.

Viewing Images

The images you upload to a photo-sharing Website will be presented as thumbnails. You can then add, subtract, or edit your images after you put them online. Clicking on a thumbnail opens a larger image on a separate page. Some sites even let you view the original image file as well. If the site is well-designed, you will also have the opportunity to send an epostcard, make prints, tell friends about the site, or other options.

Many photo-sharing Websites also let you print, reproduce, and mail your photos. Services vary from site to site, so decide on which services you and your viewers want before making a decision

of which site to go with. The big difference between this kind of photo printing and the traditional kind you get at the drugstore is that you only print and pay for the photos you like. No more getting back tons of poorly exposed prints that are of no use to anyone. Visitors to your site can also order prints for themselves.

Preparing Images

Many digital cameras give you a choice of recording your images in various qualities. If you're just taking pictures so you can put them online, or making small prints, you can safely use the standard quality setting, which gives you many more pictures per memory card. However, if you intend to print large images, you may want your images to be of the highest quality.

Some digital cameras will save images only in the JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) format, a compressed file format, while other cameras can save images as uncompressed TIFFs. If you're scanning photos for posting online, you also have image-quality options to consider.

Unless there is a compelling reason, try not to upload TIFFs to a photo-sharing Website (some photo-sharing Websites do not even accept TIFFs), particularly if your goal is just to share them electronically rather than making prints. That's because the uncompressed file size is much larger than necessary for online viewing. If you are scanning paper prints, crop your images and scan at 72 dpi, then save as a JPEG. The JPEG format also can print very well, especially if your images were shot at the highest quality offered by your camera.

Cropping images lets you focus in on

your subject in a natural way, removing extraneous details. If you want to use an image editor such as Photoshop to color-correct, resize, or otherwise manipulate your images, do so before posting your image online. Many photo-sharing

Websites give you rudimentary photo editing utilities such as Crop, Rotate, Brighten, or Darken, but you'll have more control over your image — and the way it eventually prints — if you edit it before you upload.

When you download images from your digital camera into your hard drive, they are invariably given some arcane name or number with the suffix of JPEG. After you decide which ones you want to post online, change the names

Crop and Edit First

Cropping images lets you focus in on your subject in a natural way, removing extraneous details. If you want to use an image editor such as Photoshop to color-correct, resize, or otherwise manipulate your images, **do so before posting your image online.**

to something more descriptive.

Be aware that many photo-sharing Websites have strict rules about posting anything illegal, pornographic, offensive, or hateful. So behave!

Creating Community

Photo-sharing Websites, in addition to being an easy way to share your images online, also use digital imaging as a way to create communities. Some photo-sharing Websites make their members' albums available for all visitors to see. However, you can also password-protect your album to save it for only the eyes you want to see it.

Photo-sharing Websites can also offer other ways to communicate, such as public or private guestbooks, slideshows, chat rooms, and more.

Da Sites

The following is a sampling of several photo-sharing Websites now online, including Apple's iTools Website. The sites were chosen for their aesthetics, range of services, ease of use, and Mac friendliness. Photo-sharing Websites are hot, and more such sites are going online every day. Even Internet portals such as Yahoo and Excite (Webshots) now give you photo album features, complete with printing services.

That means it's time to utter the mantra: Consumer beware. Because this industry is in its infancy, there is always the possibility of a shakeup or consolidation. So always keep backup copies of all of your images on your own computer system, ideally on a removeable storage drive, disk, or CD-ROM. Don't depend on a Website to store them. Generally, photo-sharing Websites have a page that gives details about the company and how it's financed. Be sure to check out the particulars of any photo-sharing Website you are considering.

Club Photo

Club Photo (www.clubphoto.com) is a Mac-friendly Website that helps you create your own photo gallery or album, greeting cards, prints, and more.

Club Photo also features the i.Share plug-in, which lets you upload your

you can edit, add photos, sign a guest book, or invite others to view the album. When you have selected Edit, you can then add pictures, change the album name, change the album style, password-protect it, and more. Be sure to update every change you make, and then click the Finished button.

You can also rotate, brighten, darken, or delete the image altogether right from the site. With a click of a button, you can change the background color of your album as well as the type size, style, and color, as well as add and remove pictures. You can design your own home page and set the title, greeting, background, and other elements.

Club Photo also features the Living Album upload utility, an intuitive way of organizing your photos. Just download the Macintosh software from the Website. After you launch it, you can drag and drop images into the album template. With each image you get a caption and a description box.

Within Living Album, you can rotate the photos, import files, and create a slide show on your desktop. It also lets you send your entire album online at once.

Rating: ★★★★★

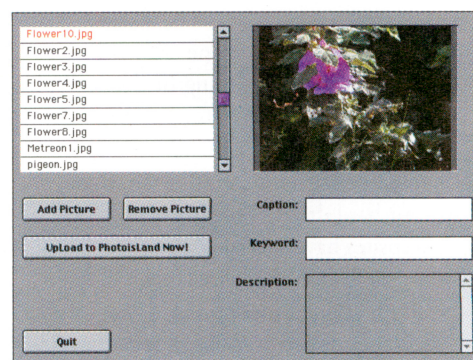
Excellent, flexible, easy-to-use Website.

Photo Island

Photo Island (www.photoisland.com) is a fun and friendly Website from ArcSoft that has a section of tips and tricks, giving you the fundamentals of digital photography and image editing, as well as a collection of special effects software you can use directly on the Website. You can also edit your image and submit it to the Website's gallery.

On Photo Island, you can create a photo montage (which creates thousands of mini photos combined to make your image), put a frame around your picture, apply a variety of special effects, and even send an epostcard, complete with music. It is possible to get totally lost in creating special effects for your photos.

The Photo Island Website also pro-



vides you with a special image uploading application with which you can send any number of images at once. Some of the other applications available for download are only for the Windows operating system, however.

Once your page is set up, just click on a thumbnail to open and view a larger version, which you then can edit or email to others. You can also view your original image.

If, when using the Photo Island uploader, you get an out-of-memory message, try uploading two or three images at a time either with the uploader or online. Also, I found that sometimes Photo Island's special effects crashed my Internet Explorer 5 browser.

While the uploader was somewhat temperamental and the online editing tools felt a bit slow at times, it was more than compensated by the ease of use of Photo Island's online special effects.

Rating: ★★★★★

Fun, flexible, easy. Some of the online and uploading utilities can get cranky.

Zing

What I like the most about Zing (www.zing.com) is its exceptionally intuitive interface and friendly look and feel. You'll know what to do just by looking at the site, and when you navigate to your own photo album, the layout of the page is engaging. It's easy to view your photo albums, upload your images, send ecards, and edit your albums. At Zing, you get unlimited free storage of your images, a simple uploading and album-creation process, and online photo greeting cards. With a click of the mouse, you



images directly from Adobe Photoshop or PhotoDeluxe. You can then direct the image into a new or existing album. Club Photo's Album to Go lets you share photos on your Palm handheld organizer.

Once you get to your online album,

can order paper prints in 4" x 6", 5" x 7", 8" x 10", and 11" x 14" size.

After editing your album the pages come up instantly with the background you've chosen. You can also designate how many columns of photos the page will have. You can view your images in normal size, the size that fits the window, or its original size. But the most fun thing you can do — instantly, upon uploading your pictures — is send a Zing greeting card with your favorite image.

Zing has many other useful features, such as ZingWorld, a Web zine that contains articles and profiles, as well as news and reviews, digital photo tips,



gallery listings, and fun features. Zing tended to work better with Netscape 4.7 than Internet Explorer 5, with which the images tended to go off the right side of the screen.

While the ZingTools multimedia slide show and ZingViewer screen saver were only available for the PC, Zing says it is developing a Mac uploader tool that should be available shortly, followed by a Mac screensaver.

Rating: 🍏🍏🍏🍏

Easy and fun to use. We await the new Macintosh utilities with great anticipation.

PhotoLoft

PhotoLoft.com is a nice, friendly place to share your images. It's intuitive, easy to use, and has all the amenities, including 50MB of storage space and options to view your images in different sizes. You can upload your images using your browser or you can send images via email. You



can also view your album, order prints, upload, transfer, edit and delete photos, manage your guestbook, and more.

PhotoLoft lets you do photo cropping right on the site. It also lets you create an address book so you can send your album to friends and family.

From any page in your album, you can send an email, order a photo gift or a reprint, or share a particular photo with someone. This site gives detailed instructions about how to use all of its functions in separate pop-up windows, which makes things easy to follow. Unfortunately, the full-featured viewer was available only for Windows.

I really enjoyed the hundreds of greeting card templates covering many occasions, which worked very well.

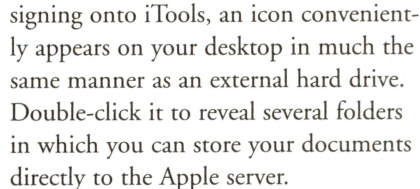
Rating: 🍏🍏🍏🍏

PhotoLoft is a nice, friendly place to put your photo album. Its intuitive interface makes it easy to navigate. The many greeting card templates were fun.

Apple iTools

If you are running Mac OS 9, then you have automatic access to iTools, the Apple Website resource (www.apple.com). With iDisk (accessed from iTools), you get 20MB of space on Apple's server in which to store documents such as images, iMovies, and text. You can also use iTools to create greeting cards, Websites, photo albums, and other fun things to share with friends and family.

To register for iTunes, just go to the Apple Website and click on the iTunes tab, from which you can download and install iTunes. After you have registered, you get an e-mail account as well as 20MB of iDisk space. After installing or



With your documents safely stored, you need only navigate to them to create an e-card or a Web page, both of which take only a few minutes. Depending on the type of page you want, there were quite a number of templates to choose from. iTools actually generates an HTML page right on the server, which you can access from your desktop.

One inconvenient part of iTools is that you get peppered with warnings if you are not interacting with the server for a certain length of time, and you will



get disconnected after a relatively short period. Also, the photo caption opportunities within the HomePage template were limited, and you can't email the URL directly from a published page.

Only after you finish creating or editing in HomePage can you email your Web URL to others. You can also send an iCard with images stored in iDisk.

Rating: 🍏🍏🍏🍏

Fewer services compared to commercial photo-sharing sites. Less server storage space. Less flexibility in writing Website captions.

Get Your Photos Online

Whichever of the many Websites you choose, photo sharing is one of the most pleasurable experiences of being online. Not only does it cement friendships and family relationships, it makes an otherwise impersonal Web a warm and cozy place to hang out. **MHJ**

Garden

Perhaps you've been yearning for the smell of lilac as you approach your front door, or

for ripe tomatoes to pluck from your very own garden for dinner's salad. Let this site be your guide. It's a gardening community that doesn't miss a trick: seeds, bulbs, bird feeders, books, gardening accessories, and tools are a few of the items you can expect to find here. The site's pages are endless, and its design is lovely. Join for free and have access to the Garden Doctor for advice, a monthly e-newsletter, and a landscape planner. A rose is a rose, but it's even more special when it grows in your own yard.

www.garden.com



There's No Place Like Home

Who says summer vacations need to be taken away from home? It'd be nice, but if it's not in the cards, enjoy the remaining weeks of summer from the comfort of your own backyard. Browse these online stores for some ways to bring summer fun and pastimes to you and your family.

MakeIceCream

Ever wonder what happened to the Good Humor Man? Since he's no longer likely to roll around your corner, take matters into your own



hands.

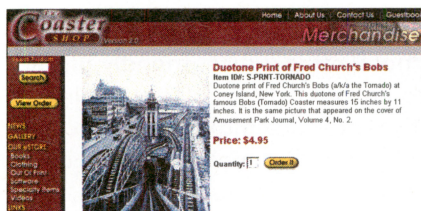
This site offers everything you'll need to become

the Ben or Jerry of your neighborhood: ice cream makers, recipes, scoops, and accessories, as well as history and trivia. More ice cream is sold on Sunday than any other day of the week, for example. Who knew?!

www.makeicecream.com

The Coaster Shop

It breaks my little heart when summer passes and I'm unable to say that I took a ride on a roller coaster. If you're like me and you can't get to Coney Island, your search for the perfect coaster needn't come to a screeching halt. Visit this site

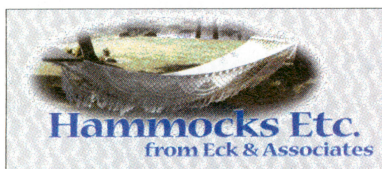


for prints, books, videos, and screen savers. With ongoing coaster news, discussions, and links, this site is sure to satisfy the enthusiast. The steeper the drop, the better!

www.coastershop.com

Hammocks Etc.

Please, if you've been considering a relaxing alternative to your patio furniture, go to this site! The array of hammocks astounds, including colorful Carnival hammocks,



Camper hammocks (you'll see), and The Big Daddy hammock, which an entire family (albeit small) can lounge upon. This site also offers clearance items, including wind chimes and pillows — all things luxurious. The site's Q&A section actually had me considering hanging up a

hammock in my San Francisco flat. But nah, I'll let the dream of a hammock and a yard live on.

www.hameck.com

Orion Telescopes & Binoculars

Summer's not only about looking toward the sun — don't forget to look up into the night sky once in awhile, or off into the distance when



you're strolling on the beach. This site is a gem for the novice stargazer and nature enthusiast. You name it, they've got it — from inexpensive to high-end telescopes and binoculars, guidebooks and software, and a priceless learning center for inquiring minds. If you're wary, check out the Clearance Center for great deals, and don't forget Orion's 100% satisfaction guarantee.

www.telescope.com

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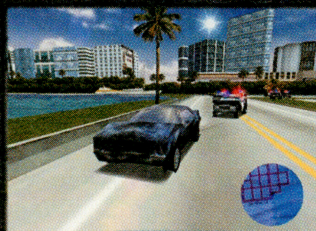
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NEW YORK

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downtowns from NY to San Fran.



"A HIGH SPEED THRILL RIDE!"
NEWSWEEK

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www.wizardworks.com/macsoft/

A Class Act

MacHome's Round-Up of Grading Software for Teachers

If you know good teachers, you also know that there's one immutable truth: Hard-working teachers make Internet startup CEOs look like slackers. And there's no period more stressful in the life of a teacher than report card season.

Short of regularly entering grades in a grade book, there's really nothing that you can do ahead of time to relieve the pressure at the end of a quarter. Averaging grades, double-checking to be certain that these averages are correct, and writing thoughtful notes for each student, can never be done ahead of time.

Enter computerized grade book programs. There are literally dozens on the market. (So many, in fact, that we had to limit our coverage to what we thought were the six best programs.) What each of these programs offers to teachers is the ability to significantly reduce the time spent averaging grades and compiling notes at the end of each grading term.

By Jeff Battersby

Not surprisingly, each program uses a spreadsheet-like interface for entering student names, assignments, and grades. All of the programs also maintain a running GPA and display the student's current grade for the term. Some programs can even display a student's class ranking, as well as charts detailing a student's progress. What pushes the best programs to the top of the roster is cross-platform capabilities, easy transitions between letter and number grades, simple maintenance of attendance records, and standardized progress reports that can help keep parents, students, and teachers on the same page. Where they differ — and where our winner truly excels — is in the area of user-interface, report generation, and ease of use, making the task of grade keeping as effortless as possible.



First Class Gradebook

Some people will tell you that you can't get anything good for free. Perhaps they weren't grading papers. First Class Gradebook is a program that was a commercial product in a former life, but now falls under the heading of free-ware. But don't be fooled, it's a downright excellent program.

When you initially open the program, First Class Gradebook walks you through the process of setting up your classes and initial assignments, including the setup of grading scales and the conversion of letter to numeric grades. The program provides four standard reports, including pages for your grade book, progress reports, and report cards. While the program has only four reports, it allows you to create a pick-list of customized text that you can place in your reports.

The program also allows you to add a particular level of importance to each assignment, and to drop either individual grades for specific students or the lowest grade for every student, all with a simple menu option. First Class Gradebook provides no means of tracking attendance from within the program and, since the program is free, the only support you can get for the program is in its excellent PDF-based User Guide.

Gradekeeper

Gradekeeper is a program that was created because the author couldn't find a reasonably priced program that satisfied all of his grading needs. The program is cross-platform, which means that if you do decide to buy the program for your school you should be able to keep everyone relatively happy.

Like First Class Gradebook, Gradekeeper provides you with a variety of ways to customize the program to suit your specific needs. Gradekeeper allows you to choose from three standard grading scales: Standard, Pass-Fail, and OSU (Outstanding, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory). You also have the freedom to choose your own ranges for letter grades but, unfortunately, the program only allows you to enter number grades, and then converts those to letter grades based upon your set scale.

Gradekeeper provides you with an excellent attendance module and also includes a wide range of reports both for individual students and for your whole class. While the program only allows you to create customized reports and letters by exporting text and then using your word processor's mail merge features, the program does provide one rather interesting feature: Web-based reports. These reports can either be one detailed page for each student, or you can create a single page that includes grades for all students sorted and displayed by student ID. The program also includes an excellent, detailed manual.

eClass Grades

Although eClass Grades is a little cumbersome to use — you have to bounce between three separate windows to view or create students, assignments, and scores — it's still an excellent program with some very useful features. The program allows you to maintain up to 30 separate grading scales that can each be customized to suit a student's specific needs. The program makes it possible to add either letter or number grades, converting your letter grades to match the scale being used with each individual student. The program is stellar when it comes to adding comments to report cards or progress reports. You can create an unlimited number of comments, each of which is assigned a number. By typing a number or collection of numbers into a student's comment field, you automatically add the entire comment to that student's report.

Unfortunately, the program lacks a cogent way to track attendance — you can print pages for keeping roll, but there's no way to track attendance from within eClass Grades. The program provides limited graphs and progress

Students

English 11 (Period: 01)

Riley, Miguel
Calder, Cara
Cortez, Miguel
Dandrea, Drew
De Cator, Lisa
Escobar, Lauren
Gale, Kevin
Goodell, Rafael
Guitron, JJ
Hedlund, John
Huang, Mark
Jones, Carlos
Lin, Sarah
Mayer, Meghan

Personal Address School Classes Scores Status Notes

First Name: Mark
Last Name: Huang
Gender: Male
Birth Date: 6/17/1983 (mm/dd/yyyy)
Telephone: 7145550181

☐ Show Advanced Fields

New... Delete

Close

charts, but they work well enough to give you the information you need.

MicroGrade 5.0.2

Like Gradekeeper, MicroGrade is a cross-platform application that allows you to share data files with both Windows and Mac users. The program has the look and feel of a Windows-based program, which exposes its Achilles heel. While eClass Grades was a bit unwieldy, MicroGrade takes visual cacophony to new heights.

The program bombards you with four windows as soon as you open the program. While it's possible to close any or all of the windows, the program would be much easier to work with if there was some kind of tabbed-window arrangement you could resort to.

Interestingly, every program we reviewed (MicroGrade aside) looked and worked like the paper grade book most teachers are accustomed to using. While maintaining a paradigm isn't what makes a grading program good, if you're going to change the way teachers track grades, you should do so in a way that enhances, not detracts from, the grade-keeping process.

Like almost all of the other programs, MicroGrade allows you to enter letter grades as well as number grades. Once you've entered students and assignments,

Demo Gradebook

Score Attend Seating Student Assign

Quarter 2: Reading

AE AU AH AS TE TU OF OI OV ON

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21

Supply Table Overhead Kendri, Allison

Computer Books

Grifford, Karen Brown, Jonathan

Easy Grade Pro's seating chart, and Integrate Pro's student information window.

the program makes it relatively easy to enter grades. You simply choose the first student in your student list and then select the assignment in the separate assignment window. You then click an arrow button to move to the next student record and repeat the process. Micrograde provides the unique ability to email messages to student's parents right from the student record. Also, like Gradekeeper, you can create reports that can be posted to a Website where parents and teachers can review them — a feature that would have delighted my parents and thrilled my teachers, as I had a tendency to “lose” my less-than-

check it out...

Remember to visit the education section of Apple's Website at

www.apple.com/education

stellar report cards.

InteGrade Pro

InteGrade is another cross-platform application that messes with the standard grade book idea, although the change isn't nearly as egregious as in MicroGrade. All of your data is displayed in a single window with Tasks (a.k.a. assignments) displayed in the top half of the window and student information displayed in the bottom half. Menus at the top of the window allow

you to switch easily between classes and to change the way you view your data. For example, if you only want to view your students for a specific class, you select Students from the Show menu, and only your students and their grades will be displayed. The only problem with displaying information is that the program translates Task names like, “Effective use of a variety of strategies in problem-solving process” into gibberish like “EfctvUsVrtyStr” in order to make the text fit in the assignment column.

The program allows you to create both numeric and Skills spreadsheets. The Skills spreadsheet allows you to track a student’s progress at mastering a specific task without requiring you to enter a letter or number grade. InteGrade allows you to enter letter grades, but the program only ships with A, B, C, D, and F. If you want to add pluses or minuses, and so forth, you’ll need to change the settings yourself.

InteGrade provides you with a number of useful reports, from progress to student demographics. There are also several graphs that can be viewed on screen or printed for distribution, making it easy to view a snapshot of your class’ current status.

Easy Grade Pro

Earlier, I pointed out that two of the programs we reviewed departed wildly from the paper grade book paradigm. I’m happy to state that Easy Grade Pro not only sticks to the “old standard,” but it so gracefully marries the concept to the computer world that your transition will be nearly seamless.

The Easy Grade Pro environment consists of a single window with five tabs at the top. The tabs link you to five distinct, yet related, aspects of the program: Scores, Attendance, Seating, Students, and Assignments. When you first open the program, Easy Grade walks you through the process of adding classes, setting class options, adding students, and adding assignments for each class. Attendance may be taken from either the seating chart or the attendance sheet, and you can also import students and assignments from previously created classes. The program also provides great flexibility, both in the way scores are displayed and in the grading scales that you can assign to individual students.

Like all the other programs we reviewed, Easy Grade Pro is cross-platform and provides a wide range of report options, also allowing you to save

reports as PICT files that can be emailed to parents. Unfortunately, the downside to PICTs is that parents with Windows-based computers might not be able to view them easily.

The Head of the Class

The point of grade-keeping software is to ease the crunch that inevitably comes at the end of every grading period. Unfortunately, MicroGrade, while it’s certainly capable of cataloging grades, makes entering that information confusingly difficult. InteGrade Pro also departs a bit too far from what can be considered a “normal” grade-keeping standard, and may be difficult to master. Gradekeeper and eClass Grades are both excellent choices, providing numerous features in relatively inexpensive programs. First Class Gradebook, based upon the sheer fact that it’s free and can keep pace with either Gradekeeper or eClass, is an excellent choice — just keep in mind that there is no support available.

As good as these programs are, none holds a candle to Easy Grade Pro, which integrates the best features of all the other programs and adds dozens of other useful features and shortcuts. There’s no question in our minds that Easy Grade Pro clearly sits at the head of the class. **MHJ**

Grading Software

Product	Manufacturer	Price-Individual/ Site Licensing			Rating
First Class Gradebook	Scott Marcy http://home.rmi.net/~mscott	Free/Free	Excellent program with a good setup process, and it's free	Because it's free, there is no support, no attendance tracking	★★★★
Gradekeeper	Daniel Ethier www.gradekeeper.com	\$20/\$100	Excellent attendance module, unique Web report feature	Can't enter letter grades, customized reports need to be created in your word processor	★★★★½
eClass Grades	Chancery Software www.chancery.com 800-999-9931	\$79/single user license	Very versatile comments feature, allows entry of letter grades	Weak attendance tracking, crowded interface	★★★★½
MicroGrade 5.0.2	Chariot Software www.chariot.com/micrograde.html 619-298-0202	\$70/ \$495-\$595 Mac, \$695-\$995 Mac & Win	Allows entry of letter grades, can post grades and reports to the Web, and email reports from within the program	Interface forces you to navigate too many windows, upholds no grade-keeping standards	★★★½
InteGrade Pro	National Computer Systems www.integrade.com 800-736-4357	\$85	Easily switch between a multitude of views, allows “non-grade” spreadsheets	Unusual interface, translates long assignment names into gibberish	★★★★
Easy Grade Pro	Orbis Software www.orbissoft.com 253-848-6899	\$49/\$249 Mac, \$374 Mac & Win	Excellent marriage of paper grade book to computer, easy to use with numerous timesavers	None	★★★★★

Flash Action Duo

For the record: I find it rather irksome when software publishers distribute titles on CD-ROM that could very well meet the masses in some simpler form. An example? School Zone's *Flash Action* duo, *Old Maid* and *Go Fish*, could easily be sold as two decks of cards. Neither of the two titles strays from the way we remember these old card games, but there they are on the screen, waiting to serve as alphabet and number drills for the kiddies. My fuddy-duddiness aside, this pair is truly scrumptious.

My crush began as soon as I saw the packaging.

It's glossy and colorful, and very tree-friendly (bravo School Zone!). The games are just as bright and tempting as the boxes they come in, but kids may fumble a bit — more so with *Old Maid* — before they become comfortable with gameplay.

You remember *Old Maid*; it's all about not picking up that card! One to three players can play at a time, but the shifting cards will probably stump youngsters, particularly when they play alone, as they won't be viewing the actions of their opponents. Each player's cards are shown on the screen, which moves pretty fast. Kids will be trying to find pairs — such as the number 3 and the word three — that when matched create fun characters. Unlike *Go Fish*, this process is a guessing game. When children do pick a matching card from another's hand, the adorable martian-like characters cheer before your little ones figure out on their own that they've got a pair, detracting from the fun of discovery.

During *Go Fish* gameplay, one to three players scramble to find pairs of letters — upper and lower case — of grown-up and baby animals. Typical and atypical kid-friendly animals are

represented: bears, ducks, narwhals (!), and vultures (yikes), to name a few. Of the two, this game is more interactive because kids play off their opponents' hands, which also hones memorization skills as they try to pool their pairs.

Kids may share just as many giggles signing on to these games as they do playing them. The characters are adorable.

"Pick me, pick me," they beckon as they strut their stuff and tap on the screen. *Old Maid* hosts six characters from another galaxy, including Flit Widgit, Girl Gizmo (hmm, wonder why they

singled out a female character in this seemingly non-gender group), and Tri Matrix.



rating ★★★★★
Flash Action Go Fish
\$20, School Zone
Interactive
www.schoolzone.com
800-253-0564

Go Fish characters include Ginger the cat and Clover the raccoon. Kids can use the names given or enter their own if they desire.

Aside from the game screen, these programs each host only one additional screen, where players can view their pairs for extra fun. Click on a creature created from a pair in *Old Maid* and it comes to life in wonderful animation; your kids can count along with the computer — seven feet, seven spots, etc. Click on a pair of animals in

Go Fish and there's not as much spectacle — the alphabet is reinforced and kids learn the names of baby animals.

For alphabet and number drills, you'll be satisfied with these games. I think the kids will come back to *Old Maid* and *Go Fish* time and again, just as I did when I played them with a deck of

cards as a child. Yep, I'll chalk that fuddy-duddiness up to nostalgia, to a time when a card game was played with, um, cards.

— Carolyn Blackburn

MP Express

With plenty of good presentation software available, why would anyone want to create another? That's what I asked myself before looking at *MP Express*, the multimedia presentation tool developed for ages eight to adult by the folks at Bytes of Learning.

The differences between *MP* (Multimedia Presentation) *Express* and other presentation software are evident. The first necessity that similar programs lack is ease-of-use; *MP Express* is definitely user-friendly. A tutorial is offered at the onset that virtually walks one through the program's features. By the tutorial's end, creating a presentation will be a snap. This CD-ROM includes much of the multimedia needed for creating a presentation, and these creations take little time to make. With *MP Express*, you can create multimedia presentations with all the trimmings: video, pictures, music, sound, and narration.

Because it's easy, users can focus on the content of the presentation rather than on the software or technology. For teachers and students, this is a significant plus. Too often in similar programs, focus during the time spent learning shifts from the subject or content to the technology. *MP Express* ensures that the focus stays on the subject matter.

MP Express comes with a sample set of backgrounds, pictures, movies, sounds, and music, but other resource CDs organized around specific themes are also available, and sold separately for \$30 each (see sidebar). Additionally, the user can import any common formats, including virtual reality (VR) videos or material captured from the Internet. The feature that allows you not only to play music, but also to record your own, and mix other sounds by microphone, is a nice touch. It takes the complexity and

MP Ex-tras

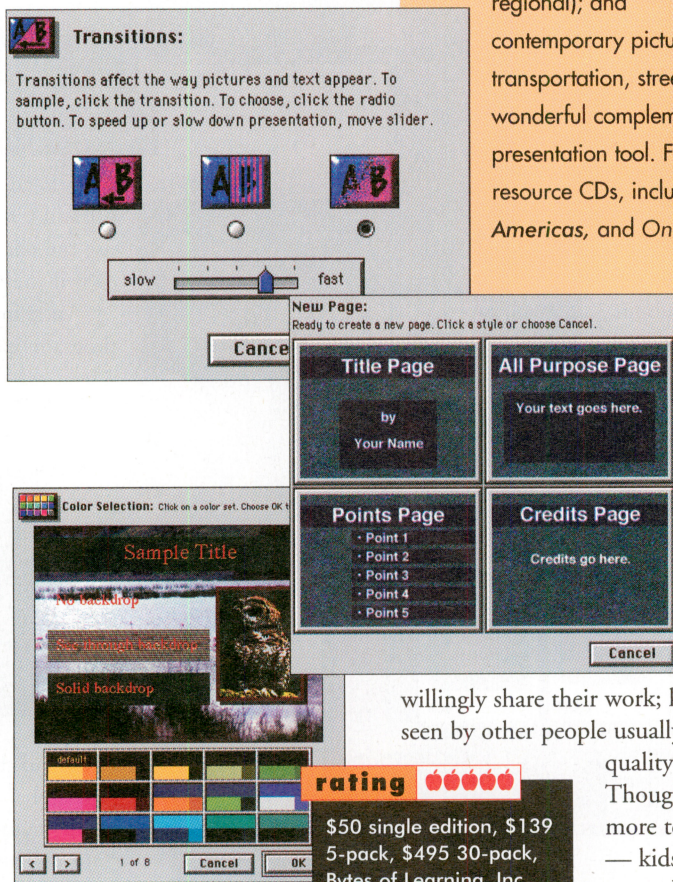
MP Express resource CDs provide collections of movies, pictures, sounds, and music, as well as teaching ideas for specific themes. I

looked at the *People of the World: Africa* resource CD.

What makes it special is its diversity of selections: an appealing collection of traditional sounds and music (such as elephants, drums, and flutes); contemporary sounds (city and traffic) and music (lounge and

regional); and

contemporary pictures and movies (modern modes of transportation, street signs, and more!). In all, it is a wonderful complement to the MP Express multimedia presentation tool. Find information about other resource CDs, including *People of the World: The Americas*, and *On the Brink: Endangered Species & Habitats of North America*, at www.bytesoflearning.com.



your presentation.

When your masterpiece is finished, a player included in the software allows you to send your completed presentation to friends, or to make a videotape for the family. This feature is a real plus, as it encourages kids to

willingly share their work; knowing their presentations will be seen by other people usually puts a stronger emphasis on the quality of the work they will produce. Though it is a bit complicated — that is, more technical than the rest of the program — kids seem to intuitively understand how to work it.

Available in both single editions and 5- or 30-station editions, which can be installed on networks, *MP Express* and

its resource CDs make the perfect multimedia presentation tool for either home or school.

— *Cathy Parise*

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www.wizardworks.com/macsoft

Games People Play

News from the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2000

The Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) that took place in Los Angeles last May was — as it is every year — a veritable extravaganza of sights and sounds. MacHome reports on the hottest E3 news for the Mac user.

Myst — The Saga Continues

When *Myst* came out in 1993, it turned the entertainment world on its head with its surreal and evocative graphics and sounds, and its intriguing puzzles required a subtle problem-solving strategy rather than a quick wrist. Then came *Riven*, the sequel, which also was quite popular, but for the longest time there was no indication that the Miller brothers were planning a third game in the *Myst* tradition. But *Myst*-lovers, your day has come — at E3, Presto announced *Myst III: Exile*, which will be distributed by Mattel Interactive and should be out by the time

you read this. Although the Miller brothers didn't have a hand in the project this time, Michael Kripalani, executive producer of *Myst III*, says Cyan (the Miller brothers' company) "blessed the overall project."

Hoping to improve upon the already stunning visual power of *Riven*, *Myst III* will employ a "panoramic viewing engine" that will allow complete, 360° views. Dan Irish, producer, says *Myst III* will also offer puzzles that are more fully integrated into the story.

Presto Studios, 858-622-0500, www.presto.com

You Say Goodbye, I Say Halo

Bungie gave a special preview of *Halo*, to be released during the first quarter in 2001. *Halo* is a battle game that completely stretches the limits for what's possible in a gaming environment. Players join others, via network, in a submersive, richly detailed, alien environment. In the world of *Halo*, you can walk, run, shoot, collaborate, conspire, and even commandeer vehicles. And as you perform all of these complex actions, the graphics engine dutifully recreates each view for each individual perspective. The preview, shown using *Halo*'s actual graphics engine, was stunning. Bungie, 800-295-0060, www.bungie.com



Tilt!

Oh boy, are we excited! From Sierra, the creators of the *You Don't Know Jack* series, comes *3-D Ultra Pinball: Thrill Ride*, the latest in its *3-D Ultra* series. Due out in August, this screamer combines traditional roller coaster rides with an arcade twist. It comes complete with a special nighttime mode featuring a fireworks display. Ah, roller coasters and fireworks — the only thing missing is cotton candy!

Sierra, 800-757-7707, www.sierra.com

Catch a Dream

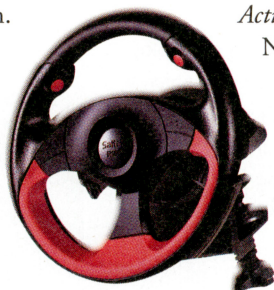
Count on Dreamcatcher for quality titles that are easy on the eyes. A few goodies were slated to ship in June, including *Traitors Gate*, *Beyond Atlantis*, and *Dracula Resurrection*. Due out in August is *The New Adventures of the Time Machine*, a game inspired by the work of H.G. Wells (goodie!) in which players explore time travel and struggle to survive against the forces of time.

Dreamcatcher, 416-638-1170,
www.dreamcatchergames.com

Start Your Engines!

For the longest time, steering-wheel controllers have been unavailable on the Mac platform.

Instead, we've had to use joysticks to drive our virtual cars. But no more! Saitek has released the R100 Sports Wheel, for \$50. This spiffy number clamps to your desk and comes with gas and brake pedals that you rest on the floor.



For the wee 'uns, KB Gear Interactive has come out with the Little Tykes 3-D Cruiser, a \$49 desktop steering wheel with controls for ignition, gears, and windshield wipers; a horn; and buttons that transform your vehicle into a plane or a boat. It comes with its own driving/flying/boating game. *Saitek*, 310-212-5412, www.saitekusa.com
KB Gear Interactive, 612-941-1735, www.kbgear.com

Rainy-Day Games

The folks at Macsoft never let us down. Slated for release in September, they bring two classic board games to the Mac: *Scrabble* and *Monopoly*. All of your buddies have plans? Play against your computer! *Scrabble* comes complete with an onscreen dictionary with pop-up definitions and hints (hmm, built-in cheating?), and *Monopoly* will wow you with wonderful 3D animations. *Links LS 2000*, a little late for Father's Day, should ship in the fall as well. With six new world-class golf courses, including St. Andrews, and 12 golfers, including Arnold Palmer and Fuzzy Zoeller, Macsoft promises this one will be the "most realistic golf experience ever played on the Mac." *Macsoft*, 800-229-2714, www.wizardworks.com/macsoft

Go, Blue!

Humongous Entertainment has all the fun. To get kids (and adults alike) yelping with delight, it only needs to utter one little word: Blue. Yippee! (See, I

told you.) Due out by the end of August are *Blue's Art Time Activities* and *Blue's Reading Time*

Activities. Humongous meets Nickelodeon's ever-popular *Blue's Clues* TV program once again; together they're bound to creatively teach the basics of art and reading to youngsters.

Humongous,
800-499-8386,

www.humongous.com

Mouse Capades

Also due out in August is the long-awaited *Mia* sequel by Kutoka Interactive. In *Mia 2: Romaine's New Hat*, wide-eyed, skateboarding cutie *Mia* has to rescue her mother's new hat back from Romaine the rat. This rollicking adventure features science activities that will entertain your 5- to 11-year-olds for hours.

Kutoka Interactive,
514-849-4800,
www.kutoka.com

I Love Oz

Among the seven new titles DK Interactive Learning introduced at E3, *Oz - The Magical Adventure* is the one that got our ruby slippers skipping. Due out in August, this game will have kids oiling their problem-solving abilities as they search for Dorothy, who has been captured by the Wicked Witch. Also, the newest title in DK's award-winning *I Love* series is *I Love Reading*, which is slated for an October release and should turn frustrated beginning readers into happy and accomplished readers. *DK Interactive Learning*, 877-342-5357, www.dk.com

Magic e-Kingdom

Disney Interactive introduced heaps of new titles, including a couple specifically for the little ladies. Due in September are *Beauty and the Beast* and *Little Mermaid II*, for girls ages 5 through 8.



Each brings familiar characters together with creative and adventure activities, including Belle's Writing Desk and Melody's Daring Dive. Due in August are *Buzz Lightyear Learning 1st* and *2nd Grade* CD-ROMs. Each of these includes 40 development skills specific to each grade.

Disney Interactive, 888-895-4988,
www.disneyinteractive.com

Did You Know?

TouchSense is a technology that allows you not only to influence movement with your mouse — or game controller — but also to feel sensations delivered by the program. Apple is looking into adapting this technology for use with standard mice.

www.immersion.com

I Spy a Big Red Dog

Scholastic Incorporated introduced a friendly rival for the pup Blue: Clifford the Big Red Dog. Taken from the best-selling book series, the first two installments of the *Clifford* CD-ROMs — *Clifford Thinking Adventures* and *Clifford Reading* — are due in September and will cater to children ages 4 through 6. In the former, kids will help prepare for Clifford's big birthday bash, and in the latter, Clifford will guide kids in honing their beginning reading skills. Also set for September release are two new *I Spy* titles: *I Spy School Days*, with brain-teasing puzzles for kids 5 through 9; and *I Spy Junior: Puppet Playhouse*, which will help build early reading and thinking skills for kiddies ages 3 to 5.

Scholastic Incorporated,
212-343-6898, www.scholastic.com **MHJ**

The Stone

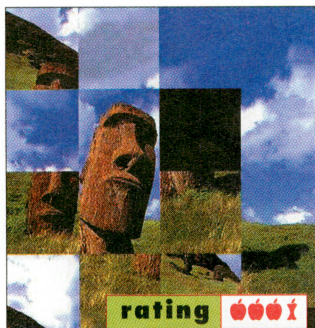
Remember the first time someone served you broccoli? Yeah, that slimy green vegetable clump with the bubbles on top.

It's an acquired taste. There are veggie eaters who swear by broccoli. They love it, dote on it. Others learn to like it over the course of time. And some, a former president among them, prefer never to eat it in their entire lives.

Well, friends, this game is a plate of broccoli.

Essentially, *The Stone* is an Internet puzzle game. You dial it up and work your way through a stream of real brain busters. The puzzles remind one of older adventure games like *The 7th Guest* or *The 11th Hour*, but without a story to hold them together.

The puzzles themselves are excellent, but you'll get no eye candy, music, or sound effects here. No action. No fights. And — for you worried parents — no gore. Instead you get visual clues, jumble puzzles, jigsaws, word-associations, you name it. And they never seem to end. Work through one layer, and another



rating 

\$20, Abject Modernity
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awaits. New official puzzles are added regularly, as well as puzzles fabricated by playing members of *The Stone* community.

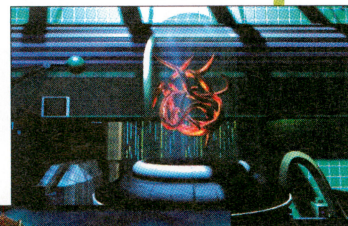
You'll also find some unique approaches. There are special, buried clues in cyberspace. The first to solve a new puzzle gets credit — your name posted on *The Stone* Website. You have a Stonemate, a working partner, if you can find him or her with the few clues you get as to where in the world they might be located. Prizes are offered now and then. You can visit community bulletin boards and ask for help on a particularly difficult poser, and someone is sure to give it.

If you're into puzzle-solving, you're going to love this game. If you insist on a story, clever aliens, and grenade launchers, you're going to wrinkle your nose and say, "Eeeyecchhhh."

See? Here comes that slimy green broccoli again.

Sid Meier's Alien Crossfire

Alpha Centauri was one of the best games of 1999, a classification it achieved thanks in part to the fact that it offered a lot of fresh gameplay long after players had beaten it. But no game can stay novel forever. No matter how you go about dominating Planet (the oh-so-creative name of the world you colonize in *Alpha Centauri*), you'll always end up in pretty much the same situations you wound up in the last time you played.



rating 

Enter *Alien*

Crossfire, the add-on pack that brings new life to the wonderful *Alpha Centauri*. With this expansion pack you get a number of new factions to play, new technologies, new enemies, and new units. But best of all, you get two entirely new alien races to play. The aliens' goals are different than those of their human counterparts, so their gameplay evolves in fresh and interesting ways. Playing against them can also be a treat, as they throw a monkey wrench into your planetary diplomacy.

Alien Crossfire brings some fresh meat to the table and is a must for anyone who's looking to stretch out *Alpha Centauri*'s life. The new technologies add nifty, keen new units to help rain terror down on your foes, and the new Planetary life forms will have you wishing for the comfort of a raging band of mindworms. This expansion pack is a class act from head to toe. Three cheers to Westlake Interactive on another quick and dirty conversion in record time.

— Alex Handy

\$20, Aspyr
888-212-7797
www.aspyr.com

— John Lee

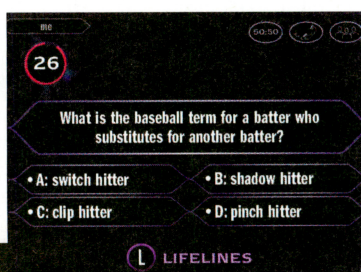
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2nd Edition

"You've come this far, Carolyn, and now, here's your million dollar question."

I fantasize Regis Philbin, famous TV host, standing before me. "I'm ready, Regis."

"For one million dollars! How many apples will *MacHome Journal* give to *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2nd Edition*?"

If you've seen the televised show, you know that contestants talk themselves through the four given choices until they decide on an answer. So here goes.



"Well, Regis, I know the answer is neither B nor D, so I'll have to go with answer A: five apples. I know that people who love the TV show and who ate up the first edition of this CD-ROM will feel as strongly about its second installment because the name of this game is questions, and there's plenty of new ones here. A fan just needs to pop in this game for the same effect as the show — three lifelines per game if they get stumped, nail biting (even though real money isn't at stake), and, well, you Regis. Your voiceovers are wisely included to both champion and rib players as they work through the tiers of questions," I add coquettishly with a wink.

"Yes, I am part of the package, Carolyn. But flattery will get you nowhere!"

"I know, Regis, I know. This is precisely why I'm swaying toward answer C: four apples."

"Hmmm, I see your wheels turning. Go on."

"Well, it's just not worthy of those five apples. I'm sure it'll provide hours of fun for a fan, but I can't imagine it appealing to folks outside that demographic — people who want jolts and surprises during gameplay, who appreciate changing screen sceneries, and who want more interaction than simply choosing one out of four answers. As far as games go, four apples is really a gift. But I know that people who buy this one will get exactly what they want and expect — a bunch of trivia questions."

"She's not buttering me up anymore," he says to the audience. "So C. Is that your final answer?"

"Yes, C: four apples, Regis. That's my final answer."

— Carolyn Blackburn



Railroad Tycoon II: The Second Century

The original *Railroad Tycoon* was released over 10 years ago. It was a fabulously addictive game, and the sequel, done by fledgling developer Poptop Software, was a true classic. But like all good things, the fun eventually runs out after you've played every scenario and tried every map.

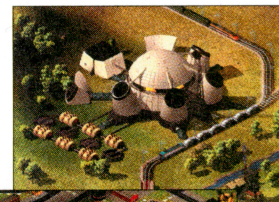
The Second Century is an extension of *Railroad Tycoon II*. Don't think of it as a sequel in the traditional sense, think of it more as the director's cut, or a special edition of the game.

With this expansion pack you'll get all sorts of new goodies: new locomotives to pull your cargo, new maps to challenge your mogul skills, and new resources to cart around for fun and profit.

Particularly noteworthy are the new urban transit system maps. These new scenarios allow you to play local robber baron and link up blighted Seattle commuters with their places of work. While the *Railroad Tycoon II* engine is not particularly well suited to this sort of close up action, the new scenarios do add some spice to an otherwise stale formula.

That is not to say that this expansion pack is flavorless. There's plenty here to keep you busy, and lots of new and inspired touches. However, none of the new items really stands out. Rather, the combination of all the new assets form a comfortable and deeply satisfying whole. So if you've got some electric trains in the basement, or you find yourself drooling over the Lionel sets at the local hobby shop, you'll definitely want to check out *Railroad Tycoon II* and *The Second Century*. Together they'll make for a virtually endless supply of sleepless nights due to highly addictive gameplay.

— Alex Handy



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Selling Your Macintosh

A Guide to Putting Your Computer Up for Sale

As you crack open the box of your new iMac or iBook, the last thing on your mind is putting the machine on the auction block. There will come a time, however, when your Macintosh will start to seem a little sluggish, a tad cramped, and a bit old.

You'll start to flip through catalogs, salivating over the speedy specifications of Apple's latest and greatest. After a quick look at your bank account, you will make up your mind to buy a brand-new computer.

But what about your old Macintosh? If you've got a son or daughter who is college-bound, they will certainly appreciate the hand-me-down. However, if you decide to sell your Macintosh, you may be able to get back a sizeable portion of your original investment. The brand-new Power Macintosh G4 you've set your heart on will now be much more affordable — and you might even use the extra cash to purchase a faster model with more RAM.

Preparing Your Ad

The first thing you must do is determine a fair market price for your Macintosh. United Computer Exchange, at www.uce.com, is one of several Websites that host a database of prices for used Macs, so you'll always know exactly what the fair market value of your computer is.

You must then determine how you will sell the computer. In most urban areas newspaper classified ads work extremely well. Thrifty consumers are always pouring over the classifieds in search of a good deal. Another option that has gained in popularity is posting to local newsgroups. (To access Internet-based newsgroups, you'll need to know the address of your ISP's newsgroup server, and you'll also need a newsgroup reader such as YA-NewsWatcher 5.0, available from www.download.com.)

Your asking price should be about 10% to 15% greater than the computer's price listed on the United Computer Exchange in order to allow room for negotiation. Be very sure that your asking price reflects any additions you may

have made to your Macintosh, such as extra RAM or USB peripherals. Also, if possible, dig up the original box, manuals, and receipt.

After you've negotiated an acceptable price with a potential buyer, you'll need to determine an acceptable payment method. Cash is always best, with money order and certified check close seconds. Never accept a personal check from someone you don't know, and do not consent to any strange partial payment plans a potential buyer might suggest. It's also a good idea to write out a receipt noting that the product sold was received in good condition, and have both buyer and seller sign it. Finally, make sure you and the buyer exchange payment for product at the same time.

Sold!

There are several other options for selling your Macintosh online, but with these you have less control over the final price. An online auction site such as eBay (www.ebay.com) allows you to set a minimum sale price and, hopefully, achieve the best possible price as people outbid each other. Other sites, such as Mac of all Trades (www.macofall-trades.com), attempt to match you with a buyer. In both cases, however, you'll have to consider cross-country shipping costs and its associated shipping insurance. **MHJ**



High-Speed Connections

Building Better On-Ramps to the Internet

The Internet has become much more than a simple diversion for many of us. It's practically the very backbone of modern communication, commerce, and community. The need to push more information over telephone lines has led to the development of several new high-speed connection technologies.

Faster download rates promise to increase the richness of online content and make technologies such as digital video conferencing a reality.

Bits to Waves

The linking of computers all over the world was made possible by the invention of the modulator/demodulator, commonly referred to as the "modem." A digital signal is a stream of voltage pulses and lulls that represent binary code (ones and zeros). To send digital information over telephone lines, it must first be transformed into an analog signal. A modem modulates the digital signal, creating a wavelength whose variance in amplitude and frequency

represent the digital data. At the other end of the telephone line another modem demodulates the

incoming wavelength and sends the deciphered digital signal to the computer for processing.

By Chris McVeigh

DSL Rising

DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) is a networking standard that is rapidly displacing the 56Kbps modem as the connection of choice. DSL uses a specialized high-bandwidth transmitter to transform a standard copper phone line into a light-speed digital connection. Most DSL connections work "asymmetrically," which means that data is downloaded faster than it is uploaded. A DSL connection can receive data at speeds up to 6,100Kbps, while data may be sent at a more modest 640Kbps. Remarkably, DSL operates at such a high frequency that the phone line can still be used for voice or fax calls.

Although your Macintosh's internal modem is attached to a serial port within the computer, DSL is connected

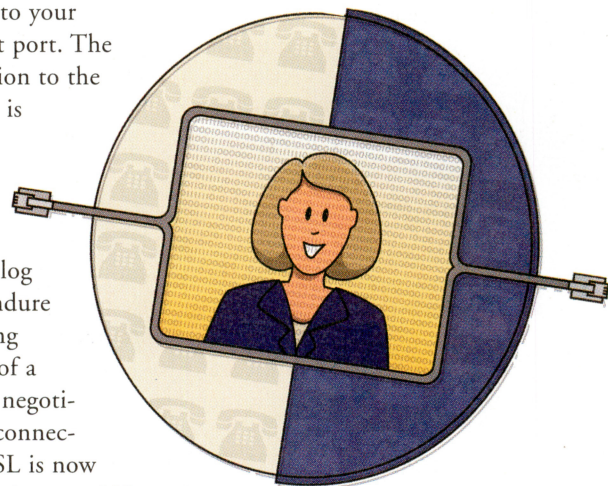
directly to your Ethernet port. The connection to the Internet is always open; you

never need to log on or endure the trying screech of a modem negotiating a connection. DSL is now available in most US

cities, but unfortunately, the technology has a limited physical range. Many people living in remote areas are out of luck.

The Cable Factor

Cable modems are another option available to users seeking a high-speed Internet connection. This technology is very similar to DSL, except instead of coming into the house on the telephone line, it uses the existing coaxial (television) cable. Cable theoretically provides greater bandwidth, but all the users in a given area share that bandwidth. Consider this analogy: If you have a huge water duct and only a garden hose attached to it, you'll have plenty of water pressure, but as your neighbors add their own hoses to the water duct, everyone's water pressure is reduced. Cable companies are aware of this and claim to be working hard to install additional nodes. **MHJ**



Idleness, Memory Problems, and Sticky Stickies

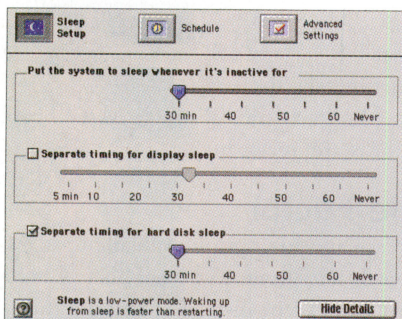
Q It seems that after my blue Power Macintosh G3 sits idle for about 15 minutes there is a delay in its ability to carry out a hard-drive-related task, such as a simple search. There is a period of five to 10 seconds before the sound of the hard drive spinning occurs, and then the requested function is carried out. Is there a way to eliminate this frustrating delay?

— Jason Goldsmith

A The performance delay is due to the hard drive spinning down to save power after the computer has been idle for a set time. It can be frustrating to wait for

By Chris McVeigh

the hard drive to spin up every time you're away from your Macintosh for a scant 10 or 15 minutes. Thankfully, there's a simple



fix. Launch the Energy Saver control panel and click on the Sleep Setup (or Idle Sleep) button in the top left. Now click the Show Details button in the bottom right. Check off the option that allows you to set separate timing for hard disk sleep, and move the slider to a more appropriate set-

ting, such as 30 minutes. Close the control panel and continue to work. You shouldn't be bothered by premature power saving again.

Q What's the difference between USB and FireWire?

— André Lanteigne

A USB and FireWire are both serial buses that allow Macintosh owners to add additional external devices to their systems. More specifically, a serial bus is an electronic pathway that shuttles digital information to and from external devices in a single stream. USB is a slower standard, transferring data at a maximum of 12 megabits per second. FireWire, on the other hand, rockets data across its cable at up to 400 megabits per second. So why don't we rely exclusively on FireWire technology to add devices to our Macintoshes? The answer is a matter of cost and efficiency. FireWire components tend to be more expensive to incorporate into new products, and moreover, a lightning-fast transfer rate of 50MB per second is overkill for many devices such as keyboards, mice, and joysticks.

Q I think I have destroyed something in my new iBook. No one thus far has been able to tell me what I did, or how to fix it. It was working fine up until a few days ago, and then as it was verifying during startup, I received this error message: "ERROR: Disk First Aid found problems with your disk that it can't repair. Back up

your disk now." Please help me!

— Careese Cannon

A Receiving such a dire message from your Macintosh can be very frightening. The most important thing to do is remain calm. You can also rest assured that you did not do anything wrong. Although your actions may have inadvertently activated the problem, such issues are usually caused by obscure programming errors.

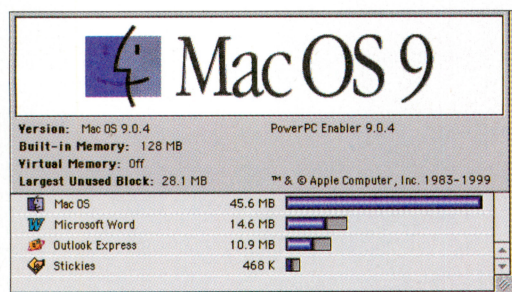
That said, you must now focus your efforts on mending the damage. There are two commercial applications that are designed to repair hard drive problems: Norton Utilities 5.0 (\$95) and TechTool Pro 2.5 (\$85). These packages are much more capable than Apple's own Disk First Aid, seeking out and repairing most issues that Disk First Aid cannot handle. Using one of these applications can be a daunting experience for the uninitiated, however. If you're not confident, you're better off packing up your iBook and toting it to an Apple service provider for proper diagnosis and repair. To find a service provider in your neighborhood, go to www.info.apple.com/siteindex.taf and click on the link titled "Service Provider Locator — US."

Q I've noticed that when I run an application and then quit, it takes a while for my iMac to relinquish the RAM used by the application. For instance, if I run Netscape and I've allotted 32MB to it, and then

quit, it seems that I cannot access that 32MB for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Sometimes I can't seem to access it until I restart the computer. Any help would be sincerely welcome.

— Josh Paul

A Technically, there's nothing wrong with your iMac. The problem you're encountering is known as "fragmented memory." When you open an



application it claims a specific, continuous section of your iMac's memory. Open another application and it will claim another specific section of memory, and so on, until your iMac's memory is full. Unfortunately, problems arise when you quit an application. Although the memory used by an application is immediately relinquished to the system, it is not necessarily contiguous with other free memory.

Consider this example: You open Microsoft Word, which claims 16MB of memory. Next, you open Internet Explorer, which stakes another 10MB of memory. Following that, you launch Outlook Express, which demands 12MB, and then you open Adobe Photoshop LE, which steals another 18MB of RAM. Since memory is claimed sequentially, visualize the application's memory segments packed tightly together in a single line. Now, let's say we quit Word, the first application that was opened, and then quit Outlook Express, the third application that was opened. This frees up 28MB of RAM, but since it is not contiguous, the largest free block of memory is actually just the 16MB that was released when you quit Microsoft Word. Unfortunately, the contents of RAM aren't shifted together when you quit an application. This is the curse of fragmented memory. Attempt to open any application that

demands more than 16MB and you're out of luck, despite the fact there is technically 28MB available.

Aside from simply restarting your iMac, the only way to join the free segments of RAM is to quit the applications that claim the space between them. If you frequently run into fragmented memory problems, make a note of the order in which you open applications. Once fragmented memory

rears its ugly head, quit open applications in the reverse order of which they were launched. Continue to do this until the About this Computer information window (found under the Apple Menu in the Finder) acknowledges that the memory has been rejoined by reporting an appropriate figure for

Largest Unused Block.

Q I *do* have a small problem that's driving me nuts. Somehow, a Stickies note has been saved to the desktop. Every time I turn on our iMac DV, it shows up on the desktop. How do I make it go

away? I have tried everything. Help!

— Bill Dunn

A Relax, Bill! Thankfully, there's a simple solution to your dilemma. Select Stickies from the Apple Menu. Once it has launched, select Preferences from the Edit menu. The fourth item listed, "Launch at system startup," is very likely checked. To rid yourself of that persistent Stickies note, simply uncheck that option, click OK, and then quit the application. **MHJ**

have questions?

Got a Mac problem that's driving you nuts? Let us take a crack at it. We'll answer questions of general interest to all readers. All mail is assumed intended for publication, and we reserve the right to edit questions for brevity and clarity. When sending your questions, include your full name and phone number. Send your questions to: questions@**machome.com**

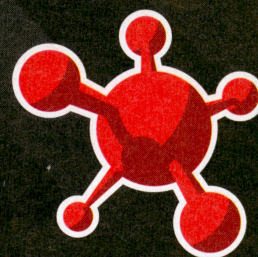
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MAC OS X READY

Start the Day at Your Favorite Web Page

Ever wish that you could get up, walk into your home office and sit down and read the morning news — all on your iMac or Power Macintosh, without having to lift a finger? Internet Explorer 5 and Mac OS 9 allow you to do just that, with a few simple clicks of your mouse.

Launch Internet Explorer and visit your favorite news site. Now, click on the URL listed in the address block and drag it to the desktop. You've just created an Internet Clipping. Return to the Finder, and drag the clipping into the Startup Items folder within your System Folder. Now, each time your Macintosh is turned on, it will immediately log onto the Internet and connect to this Website.

The next task is to program your Macintosh to start up each weekday by itself. Open the Energy Saver control panel, and click on the button at the top-middle named Schedule. A subset of preference options appear below. Check off the first item, listed as "Scheduled shutdown instead of scheduled sleep." At the bottom left, you'll see a box marked "Start-up the computer." Check off this option and then specify a time. Choose a time frame from the pop-up menu; in this case, Weekdays might be the best option (unless you want to get up early on the weekends to read the news). Now set a time — perhaps five minutes before your bedroom alarm clock is to go off. Close the control panel and continue your day.

Tomorrow morning your Macintosh will automatically start itself and log on to the news site that you placed into the Startup Items folder. You can just stumble into the office when you roll out of bed, sit down, and pour through the latest happenings. It's just too bad your Macintosh can't serve up your morning coffee — yet.

By Chris McVeigh

Easy Online Reading

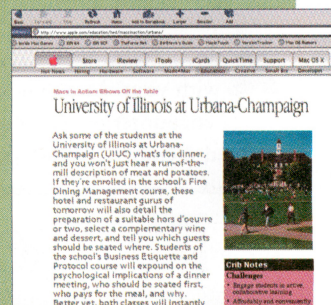
Microsoft's Internet Explorer 5.5 makes it easy to adjust the size of online text to help those of us with weary eyes. The first task is to activate Font Smoothing. This technology (also known as anti-aliasing)

uses gray pixels of different intensities to give onscreen text a smooth appearance, eliminating jagged edges. Open the Appearance control panel and click on the tab marked Fonts. At the bottom of the window, you'll see an option titled "Smooth all fonts onscreen."

Check off this item. It's also wise to select 14 from the adjacent pop-up menu since some smoothed fonts aren't very legible at 12 point. Now close the control panel.

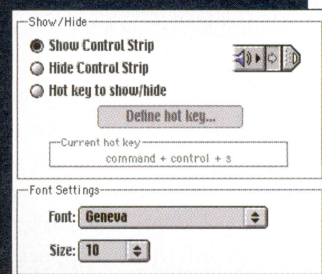
Launch Internet Explorer 5 and select Customize Toolbars from the View menu. Locate the Larger and Smaller buttons and drag them to a convenient location on the toolbar. Once you're done, simply click the back arrow.

Seek out some content you might like to read — say, one of the special-interest stories at www.apple.com/hotnews. Find the text too small and too jaggy? No problem. Click your browser's new Larger button and watch that text grow. Find a size that's easy on the eyes, grab a coffee, and get comfortable!



Lost Your Control Strip?

The control strip can usually be found extending left or right at the base of your display. Occasionally, however, it will simply disappear after you experience an unusual system crash. Don't panic! You can easily recover the control strip by opening the Control Strip control panel. A dialog box stating that "The Control Strip was not loaded at Startup" may appear. Click OK. Once the control panel appears, ensure the option to "Show Control Strip" is selected and close the window. The familiar strip will immediately rematerialize at the base of your display.



share your tips...

Got some tips you'd like to share with your fellow MacHome readers? Please send them to us at: **chris@machome.com**

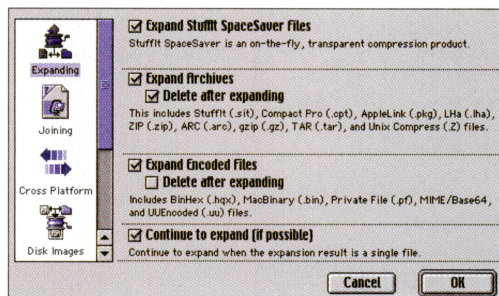
All mail is assumed intended for publication, and we reserve the right to edit tips for brevity and clarity. When sending your tips, please make sure to include your full name.

Archives, Archives, Everywhere

There's no doubt that Aladdin's StuffIt Expander 5.5 is a godsend, as it quickly and efficiently decompresses downloaded files. The only problem with the über utility is that it's not housebroken. Expander kicks in and decompresses the file as soon as it arrives, but leaves the original compressed file just sitting there on your desktop. In some cases, it even creates a third, interim file as it expands. This can create a huge mess over time.

Thankfully, you can take preventative measures to avoid the build-up of such litter.

Use Sherlock to locate StuffIt Expander 5.5 on your hard drive and then launch the application. (You can download the latest version of Expander at www.aladdinsys.com.) Select Preferences from the File menu. In the window that appears you'll notice several options listed at the left. Click "Expanding," the top-most option. A subset of preferences appears at the right. The second item listed is "Expand Archives."



"Delete after expanding." Check this item. The third item listed is "Expand Encoded Files." Right beneath it you should see another unchecked option to "Delete after expanding." Check this item as well. Now, click OK at the base of the window and get back to work. From this point on, StuffIt Expander will delete all compressed archives once they have been expanded, and you'll have saved yourself a huge mess — and some valuable hard drive space.

Mac OS Update Watch

Multimedia Update 1.0

This multimedia update improves playback of compact disc audio when virtual memory is turned on, and adds support for additional USB audio devices. The update can be downloaded from <http://asu.info.apple.com/swupdates.nsf/artnum/n11680> and requires Mac OS 9.0.4.

Mac OS 9.0.4 Update

This major update of the Mac OS improves USB and FireWire support, enhances audio, video and graphics performance (particularly in conjunction with DVD Player 2.2; see below), and provides better networking and power management. The update requires Mac OS 9 and is at <http://asu.info.apple.com/swupdates.nsf/artnum/n11610>.

DVD Player 2.2

This release of Apple's software-only DVD decoder is required for iMac DVs, Power Macintosh G4s, and PowerBook G3s that have been upgraded to Mac OS 9.0.4. It offers significant improvements in playback and corrects audio sync problems plaguing its predecessors. The software is not intended for Power Macintosh G3s or PowerBook G3s with a hardware decoding card. The update can be found at <http://asu.info.apple.com/swupdates.nsf/artnum/n11625>.



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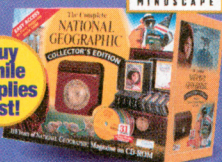
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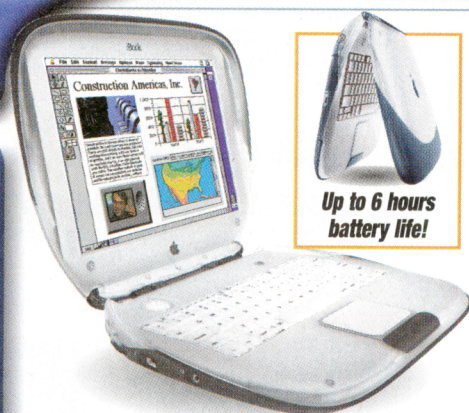
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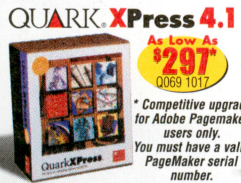
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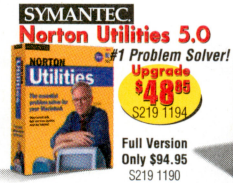
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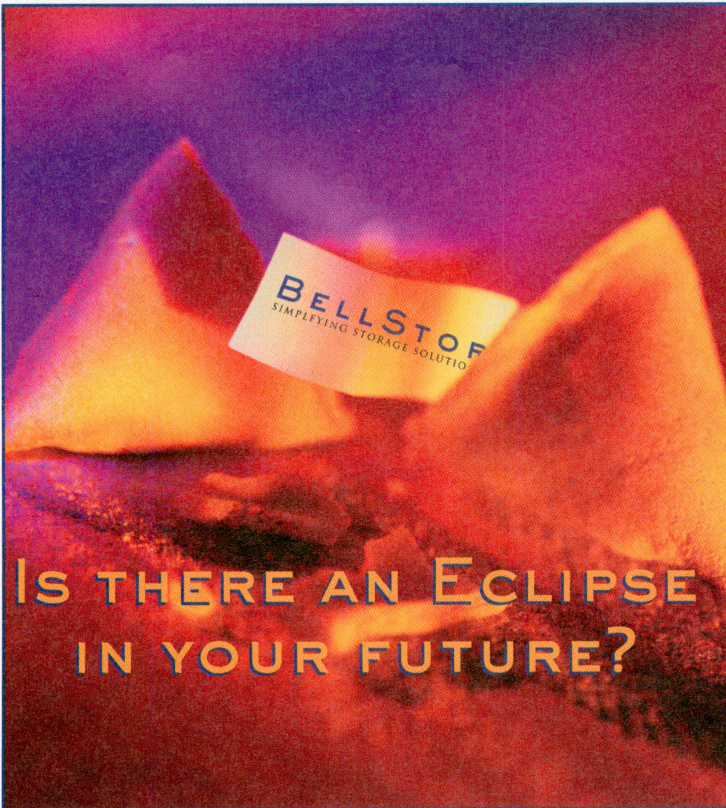
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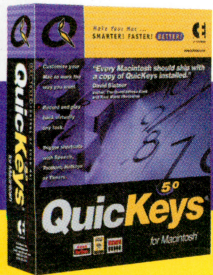
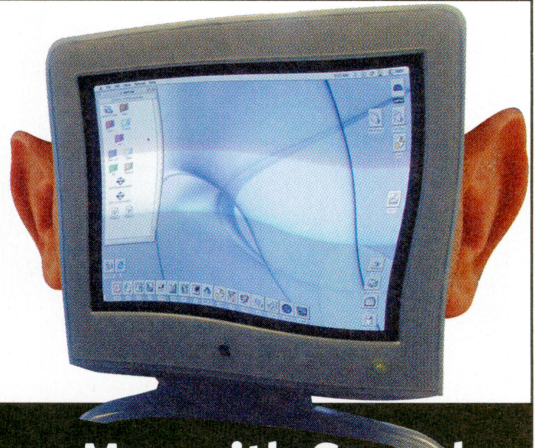
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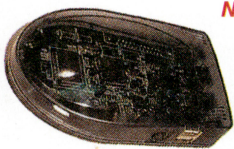
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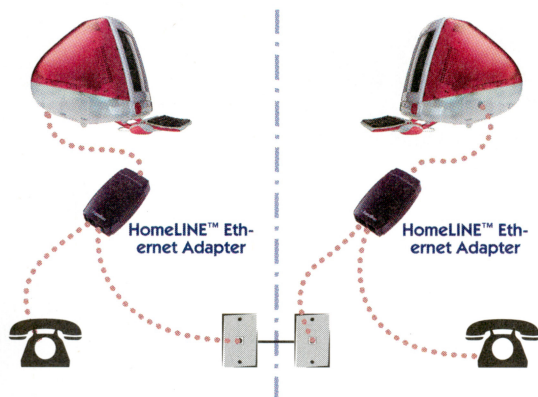
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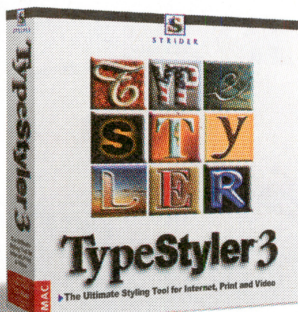
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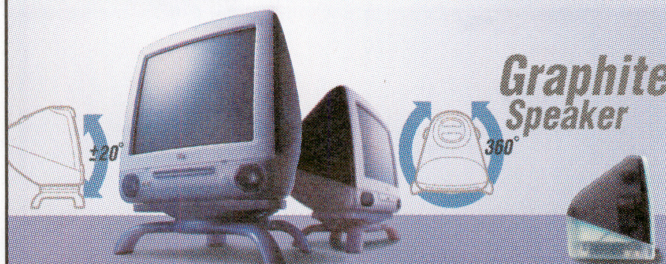
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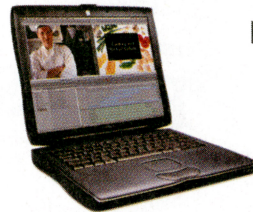
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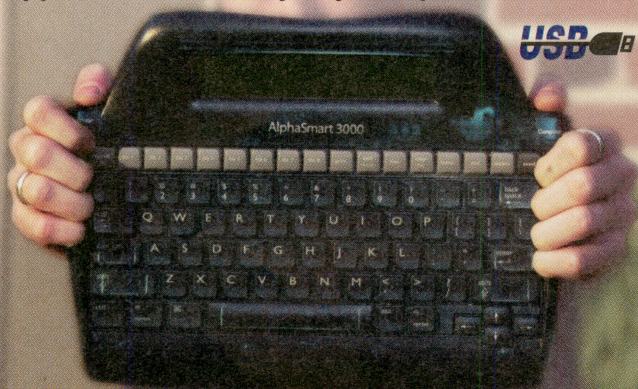
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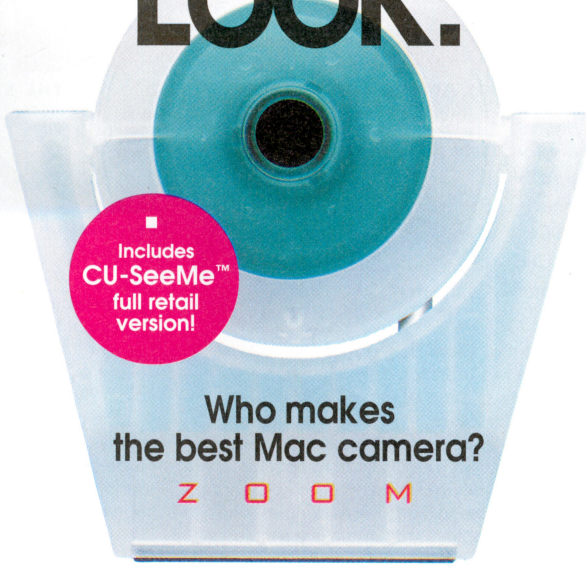
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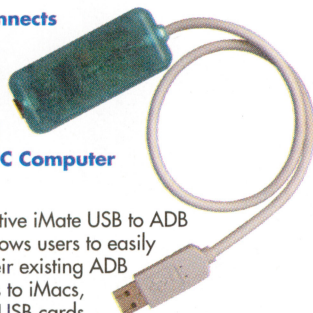
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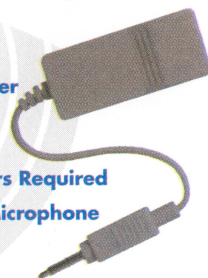
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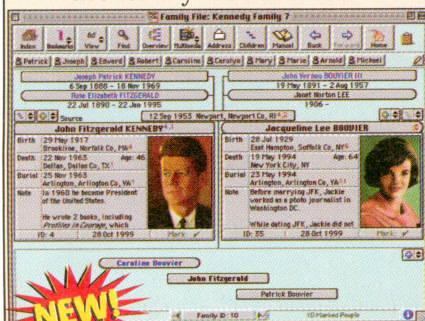
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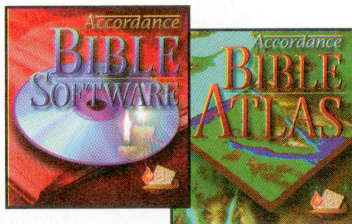
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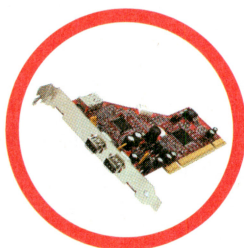


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As a science enthusiast, I love a good educational CD. As a teacher, I crave products that meet curriculum goals, are visually striking, and are entertaining as well. Over the years, I've found a few favorites I rely on heavily in my classroom and enjoy at home with my daughter. If you asked me to pick an absolute favorite, it would be mighty tough. Ranking right up there, though, would have to be the absolutely amazing products from a tiny, little-known company named Digital Frog International.

Perusing the Digital Frog catalog yields only three products: *Digital Trip to the Rainforest*, *Digital Trip to the Wetlands*, and *The Digital Frog 2*. Digital Frog promises another selection soon, *Digital Trip to the Desert*. If the desert CD is anything like the first three, get out of my way, I'm first in line! What Digital Frog lacks in selection, it more than makes up for in quality and innovation. Describing

By Joe Martha

Digital Frog products is like making a list of what Mac users love about their machines: solid research and attention to detail; clean, easy-to-use interface; good overall design; it can be used by a three-year-old but doesn't insult the intelligence of an adult; excellent support materials; and avoidance of extraneous bells and whistles that don't contribute to the function of the product. Finally, the products are stylish and have a sense of humor!

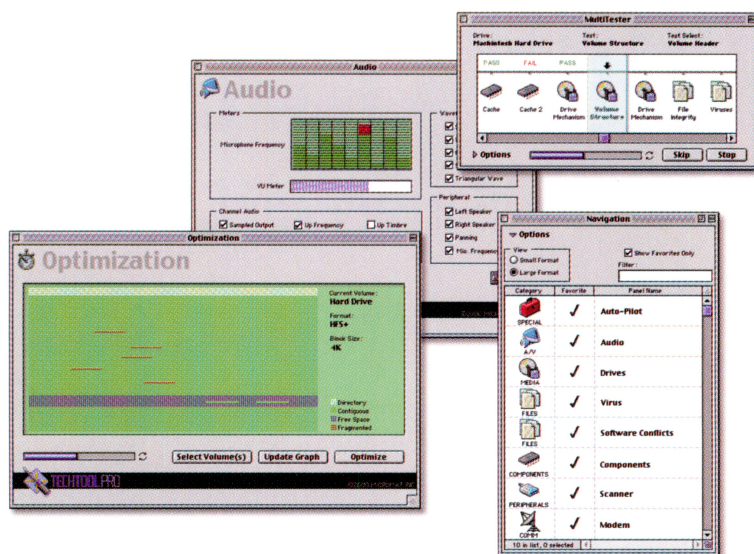
Popping in a Digital Frog CD transports you to another world. The rainforest CD has such lush photography and sounds that you'll find yourself constantly reaching to brush bugs off your shoulder. Sharp QuickTime VR movies make you feel as though dead-

wood is crunching beneath your feet as you walk through the forest. Discover animals on the trail, then click on them — you'll be taken to more rich images and information. Then just jump back onto the trail! Students really get a kick out of the inclusion of humor throughout. When you click on the howler monkey picture, you'll get this tidbit: "The best time to find howler monkeys is first thing in the morning. The best way to get them to howl is to wake them up. The best way to wake them up is to shake their tree. The first thing they do when they wake up is to urinate. You figure it out."

My addiction to Digital Frog CDs led me to contact Celia Clark at Digital Frog to find out what it takes to make a CD. I learned that these slick products are put together by a group of 12 employees (most of whom bring their dogs to work) laboring in a converted barn. It takes five to eight years to complete a title. Digital Frog does all of the content creation on Macs, and most of its customer-support time is spent helping Windows users having problems with, uh ... Windows (go figure). Digital Frog collects most of its CD content itself, which explains the list at the beginning of this article, the result of the company's last trip to Belize. Digital Frog even did its own dissecting for the *Digital Frog* CD.

ScienceMan recommends Digital Frog products without reservation. You'll find resellers at the Website (www.digitalfrog.com) listing home-version Digital Frog CDs for \$45, but if you're a teacher you'll likely want to spend more for lab packs that include workbook materials. Need more info? Find detailed reviews of Digital Frog products at www.scienceman.com. Have a great digital trip! **MHJ**

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